FOMA GORDYEEFF

MAXIM GORKY

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BY

MAXIM GORKÝ

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY

ISABEL F. HAPGOOD

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Monsieur,

Ayant reçu Votre honorée lettre je m'empresse de Vous répondre, que je reconnais Messieurs Scribner et C^ie^ les seuls éditeurs comme traducteurs de mais oeuvres du russe en anglais aux Etats Unis.

Agréez, Monsieur, mes bien sincères salutations.

Maxime Gorkii

PREFACE

Russia, like the United States, is a land of vast social contrasts, and of equally vast democratic equality, which is constantly being illustrated with striking examples of the adage that "extremes meet." Not to revert at too great length or remoteness to the past, the end of the seventeenth century offers us the spectacle of the son of a poor, unlettered peasant, himself unfavored with education or prospects in early youth, becoming the Patriarch of Russia, through his learning, virtues and strength of character; and coming to wield such great influence over the public mind as fairly to overshadow that of the autocratic Tzar, Alexéi Mikháilovitch. So influential was this great Patriarch Níkon, so powerful had he rendered his office, that Alexéi Mikháilovitch's son, Peter the Great, abolished the Patriarchate in order to obviate a recurrence of the conflicts of authority which his father's reign had witnessed. Yet the great Emperor Peter himself chose as his assistants in moulding the Russian empire the capable men, wherever he found them, which was frequently among the humblest members of the population; witness the pancake pedlar afterwards Prince Ménshikoff, the statesman whose power extended through several reigns.

More to our present purpose, however, is the case of Lomonósoff, in the eighteenth century. Like the Patriarch Níkon, an untutored lad, the son of an Archangel fisherman, he became, through sheer ability, the "Father of Russian Literature," the first moulder of the modern Russian lan-

guage, the chief scientific man in those days of universal geniuses, and the founder of divers industries and learned institutions for which Russia is famous at the present day.

In the purely literary world, we are now offered a similar phenomenon. The best native judges have, for the last three years, been proclaiming Maxim Górký as the most promising young writer in Russia—in which opinion foreigners are now concurring: while "young Russia" has made him its idol, and hails in him the successor to Count Lyéff Nikoláevitch Tolstóy. Lyéff Nikoláevitch's grand career is, probably, closed: age and increasing infirmities will militate against his adding to his present record anything which will materially alter or augment the world's verdict as to his immense genius.

Górký's career is beginning with a power which makes the reader feel that, if his genius is assiduously developed in his own way, he may accomplish results in the field of realism combined with lofty idealism and poetry which will be tremendous additions to the literature of the world, but which cannot be predicted with accuracy because we have no standard of comparison for such an evenly-balanced, powerful writer in whom these great elements have been so wonderfully united.

No greater contrast could be imagined than exists between the grand veteran who now leads the army of Russian writers, and this new recruit to the world's literary host.—Count Tolstóy, a man of high birth, position, wealth, who has enjoyed the best educational and social opportunities; Maxim Górký, a homeless member of the "Barefoot Brigade," which he has chronicled in his short stories with power unsurpassed, almost brutal, a poetry and idealism as astonishing for its loftiness as are his feeling for Nature and his gift for depicting it, which no Russian writer—not even

Turgéneff, the most remarkable of all in this direction—has ever excelled.

Turgéneff dealt with the gentry, the students, the representatives of the "young Russia" of his day, and with the peasants in their normal life in the country; Tolstóy has dealt with the aristocracy and the peasants under the same conditions as those depicted by Turgéneff. Górký deals, in his short stories, with the peasants who have become toilers in the towns, and members of the great proletariat; and in this, his first long novel, with the rich merchant class of the present day.

Ostróvsky handled the wealthy, old-fashioned, conservative merchant-class of his time in such caustic and ludicrous fashion, that the ire of the class portrayed was aroused—Górký makes one of his merchants in the present volume allude to Ostróvsky's famous comedies—and the delighted applause of the Russian public. Yet these plays are, in a way, too strictly national to appeal to foreign nations. Górký, with no less fidelity and biting wit, in a more satisfactory form, sketches the same class in their modified, yet conservative, aspect, today; but his keen arraignment of methods and morals has the broad touch which makes it apply to all lands and times. In Foma, he shows the gilded youth of all climes. With profound psychological insight he shows Foma as actually ruining his life because of his best, not his worst instincts, by truth and innate nobility, not by vices and falsehood deliberately cultivated. Rebellion against the established order of social and commercial morals is, of course, the sonorous undertone;—and this is not surprising; the author has seen more of the seamy side of life than most men.

Máxim Górký's real name is: Alexéï Maxímovitch Pyeshkóff. He was born in Nízhni Nóvgorod on March 14, 1868

or 1869 (he says), in the family of his grandfather, the painter Vasíly Vasílievitch Kashírin. His father, Maxim Savátievitch Pyeshkóff, was an upholsterer from Perm, and died when Alexéi Maxímovitch (Gorký) was five years of age. After the death of his mother, a few years later, the orphan boy was hired out to a shoemaker. With the aid of a prayer-book, his grandfather had taught him to read. The boy ran away from the shoemaker, became the apprentice of a draughtsman; again ran away, and entered the workshop of a manufacturer of *ikóni*, or holy pictures. Afterward, he worked on a Vólga steamer as cook's boy, then became assistant to a gardener. In these occupations he spent his time until his fifteenth year. At the same time, he was a diligent reader of "the classical productions of unknown writers" — "Guak; or, The Invincible Faithfulness," "Andréi the Dauntless," "Japancha," "Yáshka Smértensky," and the like.

Gorký himself thus describes his adventures:—"While I was on board the steamer as cook's boy," he says, "the cook, Smúry, exercised a lasting influence over my education. Under his guidance I read 'The Lives of the Saints,' 'Eckartshausen,' the works of Gogol, Uspénsky, Dumas Senior, and numerous little books of the freemasons. Previous to my acquaintance with the cook, I had a profound antipathy toward any sort of printed paper, the 'Passport' not excepted! After my fifteenth year, I was seized by a wild desire for knowledge, and therefore went to Kazán, supposing that knowledge is distributed gratis to those who thirst for it. However, this proved to be not customary, and therefore I went as a common laborer into a bakery, on a salary of three rubles (approximately, $1.50) a month. Of all the work I ever attempted, this was the hardest."

In Kazán Górký peddled apples, worked on the docks, sawed wood and carried heavy burdens. How difficult it was for him to make a bare living we may judge from the fact that he attempted to commit suicide.

From Kazán Górký went to Tzarítzyn, where he obtained a position as watchman on a railway. Soon after, in answer to the summons to military service, he returned to Nízhni Nóvgorod, but never became a soldier, as such "tramps" are not accepted. So he started a business in Bavarian kvas —a sort of white beer; and, at length, the much-tried member of the Painters' Guild became the assistant secretary to the well-known Counsellor at Law, A. J. Lánin. Lánin took a lively interest in him, but Górký's vagabond adventures did not end here. His tramping brought him to Tiflís, where he was employed in the workshop of a railway; and in Tiflís he published his first story in the newspaper "Kavkáz." Soon after, he returned to his native shores of the Vólga, and began to publish his sketches in the local papers. In Nízhni Nóvgorod he became acquainted with the well-known writer, Vladímir Korolénko, who exercised a lasting influence over his career as a writer. Within a year after he began to publish, he won recognition from the best Russian critics as the leading writer of fiction.

Thus Gorký continues the time-honored Russian tradition: the poor, struggling member of the "Barefoot Brigade" writes because his genius, his passionate poetry and deep feelings compel him, and he appears to be destined to take his place in the temple of Fame beside Patriarch Níkon, Lomonósoff and many other gifted peasants—and as the successor of the aristocratic Count Tolstóy!

And, although he has now settled down in Nízhni Nóvgorod, his experiences are not ended. He has been in prison seven or eight times—on the last occasion in connection with

the troubles in the early spring of the present year. In prison he received the letter of the Messrs. Scribner proposing terms for the authorized publication of this volume; from prison he despatched the cablegram of acceptance,—an incident which is worth mentioning for the suggestion as to methods of the Russian Government toward prisoners, which differ from the popularly-received notions in that regard.

ISABEL F. HAPGOOD.

August 3, 1901.

NIZHNI NOVGOROD AND THE VOLGA

FOMA GORDYEEFF

I

Sixty years ago, when fortunes reaching into the millions were being made with fabulous rapidity on the Vólga,—Ignát Gordyéeff, then a young lad, worked as water-pumper on one of the barges belonging to the wealthy merchant Záeff.

Physically built after the pattern of the gigantic heroes of ancient legends, handsome and far from stupid, he was one of the men who are always and in everything successful —not because they are talented and industrious, but rather because being possessed of a vast amount of energy, they cannot understand, cannot even pause to consider, the choice of means towards the attainment of their ends, and know no law except their own will. At times they speak with terror of their consciences, at times they undergo genuine torture in their struggle with it,—but conscience is an unconquerable power only for the weak-spirited; the strong of spirit speedily overcome it and make it the slave of their will, for they unconsciously feel that if they give it full scope and liberty it will wreck their life. They offer it as a sacrifice to their day; but if it happens that it conquers their souls, though subjugated by it, they never are broken, and live on as healthily and powerfully under its rule as they lived without it.

At forty years of age, Ignát Gordyéeff himself was the

owner of three steamers and ten barges. He was respected on the Vólga as a rich and clever man, but the nickname of "the Crazy Man," was conferred upon him because his life did not flow on in an even current, along a straight bed, as with other men like himself, but rebelliously foaming up, every little while, escaped from its bounds, in a direction away from gain which was the chief object of this man's existence. There existed, as it were, three Gordyéeffs or there were, so to speak, three souls in Ignát's body. One of them, the most powerful, was merely greedy, and when Ignát lived subject to its influence,—he was simply a man possessed with an indomitable passion for work. This passion burned within him day and night, he was entirely devoured by it, and as he seized hundreds and thousands of rubles in all directions, it seemed as though he could never slake his thirst for the rustle and chink of money. He flew about, up the Vólga and down the Vólga, strengthening his nets and setting new ones to catch gold; he bought grain in the villages, carried it to Rybinsk on his barges; he robbed and cheated, sometimes without even noticing it, though again at times he did recognize the fact, and openly and triumphantly sneered at the men he had cheated, and in the madness of his greed for money he rose to poetry. But while he devoted so much strength to his pursuit of the ruble, he was not greedy in the narrow sense of that word, and occasionally even displayed an incomprehensible but sincere indifference towards his property. Once, while the ice was breaking up in the Vólga, he stood on the shore and perceiving that the ice was crushing his new barge, forty-five fathoms long, pressing it against the ragged bank, he screamed through his tightly closed lips:

"Give it to her . . . now again . . . squeeze—crush! Come, once more now—*rrui!*"

"Why, Ignát,"—asked his friend Mayákin, approaching him, "isn't the ice squeezing ten thousand rubles out of your purse?"

"Never mind. I'll win a hundred thousand in place of it. But just see how the Vólga is working! It's robust? Hey? Mother Vólga can rend the whole earth apart, as one cuts curds with a knife . . . look, look! There goes my 'Boyárinya!' She only sailed one season. Well, shall we commemorate her death?"

The barge was crushed to kindling-wood. Ignát and his crony, as they sat in an eating-house on the bank, drank vodka and through the window watched the fragments of the "Boyárinya" floating down stream with the ice.

"Are you sorry for your vessel, Ignát?" asked Mayákin.

"Well, what's the use of being sorry? The Vólga gave and the Vólga has taken away. It hasn't torn off my hand."

"Nevertheless . . ."

"What's that? It's a good thing that I saw it myself how it all happened . . 'tis a lesson for the future. But when my 'Volgár' was burned I was sorry—I didn't see it. What a fine sight it must have been—such a huge bonfire blazing on the water of a dark night, don't you think so? It was a huge steamer . ."

"Do you mean to say that you didn't regret that either?"

"The steamer? I did regret the steamer, certainly . . . Well, regret is nothing but silliness. What's the use? Cry, if you like, but tears quench no fires. Let the steamers burn—and if everything burns, I don't care a straw! My spirit would blaze up to work—and I'd replace it all—isn't that the idea?"

"Ye—es—" said Mayákin laughing. "You utter stout words. And anyone who talks like that will always be a rich man, even if you strip him to the skin."

While bearing himself thus philosophically towards the loss of thousands, Ignát knew the value of every kopék; he rarely gave anything to beggars, even, and only to those who were entirely incapacitated for work. But if a man who had the least power of work in him asked alms, Ignát said severely:

"Begone! You can work still,—go help my yard-porter to clean up the manure, and I'll give you two kopéks in silver."

During the periods when he was carried away with ardor for work, he treated people harshly and pitilessly, neither did he give himself any rest in his pursuit of the ruble. Then, all of a sudden—and this generally happened in the spring, when everything on earth becomes so enchantingly beautiful, and from the clear sky there descends upon the soul a certain reproachful and withal gracious influence—Ignát Gordyéeff seemed to feel that he was not the master of his business but its abject slave. He became thoughtful, and gazing curiously about him from beneath his thick, frowning eyebrows, he went about for whole days at a time surly and malicious, as though silently in search of an answer to some query, yet afraid to put the question aloud. Then there awoke in him another spirit—the stormy, sensual spirit of a wild beast enraged by hunger. Insolent and cynical with everyone he took to drink, depraved and intoxicated others, fell into delirium and in that delirium gave vent to an eruption like a volcano of mud. It seemed as though he were madly seeking to rend the chains which he had forged for himself and wore, as though he tore at them and was powerless to break them. Dishevelled, dirty, his face swollen with intoxication and sleepless nights, his eyes dull, he roved about the town from one dive to another, huge, roaring with his hoarse voice,

flung his money about without counting it, shed tears under the influence of the national peasant songs, and danced and thrashed some one, no matter whom, but never found relief anywhere or in anything.

Once upon a time it happened, that the company with whom Ignát was carousing was joined—as a clod of mud sticks to the boot—by a disfrocked deacon, a short, squat man, in a ragged cassock, and with a bald head. This characterless, disgusting and monstrous individual played the part of a jester. They smeared his bald spot with mustard, made him go on all fours, drink a mixture of brandies, dance indecent dances; all this he did in silence, with an idiotic smile on his wrinkled face, and when he had done what he had been ordered to do, he invariably said, extending his hand, palm upwards:

"Please give me a ruble."

They laughed at him and sometimes gave him a twenty-kopék piece, and sometimes nothing at all; but then again, they sometimes flung ten rubles or more at him.

"You're an abomination!" shouted Ignát at him one day,——"Tell us who you are?"

The deacon was frightened by the shout, and making a low bow to Ignát, held his peace.

"Who? Speak up!" roared Ignát.

"I [1] am a man—for insult," replied the deacon, and the company roared with laughter at his words.

"Are you a worthless scamp?" asked Ignát menacingly.

"I am a worthless scamp—through want and the weakness of my soul."

"Come hither!" Ignát summoned him. "Come and sit here beside me."

[1] The deacon's language is strongly tinged with ecclesiastical Slavonic: e.g. *az*, instead of *ya*.—*Translator*.

With timid steps, quivering with terror, the deacon drew near to the drunken merchant, and stood facing him.

"Sit down here beside me!" said Ignát, seizing his hand and forcing the frightened man to seat himself by his side.

"You come near to my heart.—I also—am a worthless scamp! You—through want, I—through pure cussedness! —I am a worthless scamp because I am bored with melancholy! Do you understand?"

"Yes," replied the deacon softly.

But the party laughed loudly.

"Do you know now who I am?"

"Yes."

"Well then, say: 'You are a worthless scamp, Ignát!'"

This the deacon could not do. He stared in alarm at the huge form of Ignát, and shook his head in refusal. And the company laughed so uproariously that it was like the rumbling of thunder. Ignát could not order the deacon to abuse him. Then he asked him: "Shall I give you money?"

"Yes!" replied the deacon with a start.

"What do you want it for?"

The deacon would not answer. Then Ignát grasped him by the collar, and shook out of his foul mouth this speech, uttered with terror, and softly, almost in a whisper:

"I have a daughter—a little girl—of sixteen, in the school for daughters of the clergy. I'm saving up for her —for when she finishes school—there will be nothing wherewith even to cover her nakedness."

"Oh," said Ignát, and released his grasp on the deacon's collar. Then he sat for a long time absorbed in gloomy meditation, all the while casting glances at the deacon. Then his eyes lighted up with a smile and he said:

"Of course you're lying, you drunkard?"

The deacon silently crossed himself and his head sank upon his breast.

"It is true!" said one of the company, confirming the deacon's statement.

"Is it? All right!" shouted Ignát, and banging the table with his fist, he turned to the deacon:

"Hey there, you! Sell your daughter! How much will you take?"

The deacon shook his head, and shrank together.

"A thousand!"

The company howled with laughter at the sight of the deacon shrinking as if he had received a douche of cold water.

"Two!" shouted Ignát, with flashing eyes.

"What do you mean? How is it?" stammered the deacon, stretching out both hands to Ignát.

"Three!"

"Ignát Matvyéevitch!" cried the deacon in a thin, piercing voice. "For the sake of the Lord God—for Christ's sake! Enough of this—I will sell, certainly. For her sake—I will sell her!"

In his painfully sharp cries resounded a threat towards some one, and his eyes, which no one had previously noticed, flamed like live coals. But the party of drunken men laughed madly at him.

"Shut up!" shouted Ignát menacingly, drawing himself up to his full height, and knitting his brows.—"Don't you understand the point, you devils? This is enough to make one weep—and you yell with laughter——" He stepped up to the deacon, knelt down before him, and said in a firm tone:

"Deacon! Now you have seen what a worthless scamp I am. Now, spit in my face!"

What happened next was both repulsive and ridiculous. The deacon flung himself at Ignát's feet, crawled around them like a huge tortoise, kissed the knees, and muttered something between his sobs. And Ignát, bending over him, raised him from the floor and cried to him in a voice wherein command and entreaty were mingled.

"Spit! Aim straight in my shameless eyes!"

Stunned for a moment by Ignát's threatening cry, the company again burst out laughing so violently that the panes shook in the windows of the eating-house.

"I'll give you a hundred rubles if you will spit."

But the deacon crawled along the floor, and sobbed either with terror or with happiness at hearing this man entreat him to insult him.

At last Ignát rose from the floor, pushed the deacon aside with his foot, and flinging a roll of bankbills at him said with a surly laugh:

"Rascal—Can a man make confession to such? Some fear to receive confessions, others laugh at the sinner. I came near going to pieces completely—my heart was all in a quiver—I thought I would give—I thought nothing—that's the fact! Get out with you! And don't let me ever lay eyes on you again—do you hear?"

"Ah, what an eccentric fellow!" said the company much touched. Legends were invented in the town about his debauches, and everyone had condemned him severely, but no one ever refused an invitation to his orgies. Thus he lived for weeks together.

And then, all of a sudden, he would present himself at home, thoroughly saturated still with the odor of intoxication, but already crushed and gentle. With submissively downcast eyes, in which now burned the flame of shame, he listened in silence to the reproaches of his wife, as peace-

ably and dully as a sheep, and went off to his own room where he locked himself up. For several hours at a time he knelt before the holy pictures, his head drooping on his breast; his arms hung down helplessly, his back was bowed, and he remained silent, not daring, as it were, to pray. His wife stole to the door on tiptoe and listened. Heavy sighs resounded within—the sighs of a horse who is weary and ill.

"Oh Lord! Thou seest,"—whispered Ignát dully, pressing the palms of his hands violently against his breast.

During his days of penitence he drank nothing but water, and ate only rye bread. In the morning his wife placed at the door of his room a large carafe of water, a pound and a half of bread and some salt. He opened the door, took in this food, and locked himself up again. He was not disturbed on any account during such periods, and they even avoided crossing his path. After the lapse of a few days, he made his appearance again on 'Change, jested, laughed, accepted contracts for supplying grain, as eagle-eyed as a bird of prey, a keen judge of everything connected with business.

But in all three phases of his life Ignát was never free from one passionate longing—the longing to have a son; and the older he grew, the more intense did this longing become. This sort of conversation frequently took place between him and his wife.—As they drank their morning tea, or dined at noon, he—glancing gloomily at his wife, a fat, well-fed woman, with a red face and sleepy eyes, would ask her:

"Well, do you feel anything?"

She knew what he meant by the question, but invariably replied:

"Why shouldn't I feel something? Your fists—are like clock-weights.——"

"I was speaking of your body, you fool."

"Haven't I borne you children?"

"Girls, forsooth!"—said Ignát reproachfully. "I want a son. Do you understand? A son, an heir! To whom shall I leave my fortune when I die? Who will pray away my sins? Must I leave everything to a monastery? I've already given money there—they've had enough! Am I to leave my fortune to you? A nice kind of person to pray, you are—when you stand in church all you think of is fish-pasties. And if I die—you'll marry again—and then all my money will fall into the hands of some fool or other. Am I working for that? Oh, you——!"

And vicious sadness seized upon him, for he felt that his life was aimless, if he had no son who could continue it.

In the course of nine years of married life his wife had borne him four daughters, but all of them had died. Though he had anxiously anticipated their birth, Ignát had grieved but little over their death,—it did not matter, he had not wanted them. He began to beat his wife in the second year of their wedlock, beating her at first when he was intoxicated and without ill-will, and simply in accordance with the popular saying: "Love your wife like your soul, and shake her like a pear-tree!"[1] But after each confinement, his wrath against his wife blazed up, disappointed as he was in his hopes, and he began to take pleasure in beating her, by way of revenging himself on her for not giving him a son.

One day, when he was in the Government of Samára on business he received from his relatives at home a telegram announcing the death of his wife. He crossed himself, thought a while, and then wrote to his crony Mayákin:

[1] In Russian it rhymes: "Lubí zhenú kak dúshu, i tryasí yeyó kak grúshu."—*Translator.*

"Bury her without waiting for me, and look after the property."

Then he went to the church, had a requiem service chanted for her, and when he had prayed for the repose of the soul of the Akulína, newly appeared before God, he began to reflect that it behooved him to marry as speedily as possible.

At that time he was forty-three years of age; tall, broad-shouldered; and he spoke in a heavy bass voice, like a proto-deacon; his large eyes gazed out from beneath dark brows, with a bold, intelligent expression; in his sunburnt face, overgrown with a thick black beard, and in the whole of his powerful frame there was much purely Russian, healthy and coarse-grained beauty; his easy movements and proud, impatient gait breathed forth consciousness of strength, and firm belief in himself. Women liked him, and he did not avoid them.

Six months had not elapsed from the day of his wife's death before he proposed for the daughter of one of his business acquaintances, a kazák of the Urál, of the sect of the Molokáni (milk drinkers). The father of the girl, although Ignát was known even in the Uráls as "the crazy man," gave him his daughter, and towards autumn Ignát Gordyéeff arrived at home with his young kazák bride. Her name was Natálya. She was tall, slender, with immense blue eyes, and long, dark auburn hair, and was a worthy mate for the handsome Ignát. He exulted and took pride in his young wife, and loved her with the passionate love of the healthy male; but before long he began to stare keenly and thoughtfully at her.

Rarely did a smile appear on the oval, strictly regular face of his wife—she seemed to always be thinking of something foreign to her life, and in her ever coldly-calm blue

eyes there was, at times, a gloomy and savage gleam. During the leisure which her housewifely cares allowed her, she was wont to seat herself at the window of the largest room in the house, and there she remained, silent and motionless, for two or three hours at a time. Her face was turned towards the street; but her eyes stared indifferently at everything that lived and moved there, beyond the window, and at the same time her look was profoundly concentrated as if she were gazing at her own inward self. Her walk was strange, also: Natálya moved slowly and cautiously about the spacious rooms of her home, as though some invisible thing interfered with her freedom of action. The house was furnished with heavy and coarsely-ostentatious luxury, everything in it shone and cried aloud about the wealth of the owner, but the kazák bride walked past the costly furniture and the what-nots laden with silver, in a sort of furtive and timid way, as if she feared that all these things would seize upon her and stifle her. The noisy life of the big trading town did not interest this taciturn woman, and when she went out to drive with her husband, she kept her eyes fixed on the coachman's back. If her husband asked her out visiting, she went, and behaved herself as strangely as at home; if guests came to them she was assiduous in entertaining them with food and drink, but displayed no interest whatever in what they said, and never distinguished any one above another. Crony Mayákin alone, a droll and clever fellow, at times evoked upon her face a smile as uncertain as a shadow. He was accustomed to say of her:

"She's wood—not a woman! But life is like an unquenchable bonfire, and we all get kindled from it, and so will this milk-drinker woman—just wait. Then we shall see what sort of flowers she will put forth."

"Hey, you fantastic dreamer!" Ignát said jestingly to

his wife.—"What are you thinking about? Are you pining for your kazák village? You must live more merrily!"

She looked calmly at him, but made no reply.

"You go altogether too often to the church . . . you'd better wait! You'll have plenty of time to pray away your sins—commit them first. You know—if you don't sin you can't repent, and if you don't repent, you can't save your soul. So do your sins while you are young. Shall we go for a drive?"

"I don't care about it."

He seated himself beside her, embraced her, as she reciprocated his caresses coldly and charily, and, gazing into her eyes, he said:

"Natálya! Tell me,—why are you so far from merry? Do you find life with me tiresome?"

"No," she replied briefly.

"Then what is it? Do you wish to go to your own people?"

"Why no—that is to say . . ."

"Of what are you thinking?"

"I am not thinking."

"What is the matter then?"

"Oh, nothing."

One day he extracted from her a more extended answer:

"In my heart—there is a sort of uneasiness. And in my eyes . . . And all the while it seems to me as though this—were not real."

With a sweep of her arm she pointed to the walls, the furniture, everything. Ignát did not reflect upon her words, and said, with a laugh:

"What nonsense! Everything is as real as possible. All these things are costly and substantial. If you don't like them—I'll burn the whole lot, I'll sell them or give them away and order new ones! Well, will you have it so?"

"What's the use?" she answered calmly.

At last he was struck with amazement that a young healthy woman like her should live as though she slept, that she desired nothing, never went anywhere except to church, and shunned everybody. So he soothed her:

"Just wait—you will bear me a son, and then life will be entirely different to you. You are melancholy now because you have very little to do, but the child will keep you busy. You are going to bear me a son, of course, aren't you?"

"That must be as God wills," she replied, with drooping head.

Then her attitude began to irritate him.

"Come, my milk-drinker, what are you hanging your head for? She walks as though she were treading on glass,—she looks as though she had committed a murder! Heigho! You're a robust woman, and you have no taste for anything—you little fool!"

One day, when he came home intoxicated, he began to worry her with caresses, and she repulsed them. Then he waxed angry and shouted:

"Natálya! Look out—don't be foolish!"

She turned her face to him and calmly inquired:

"What will happen then?"

These words and her fearless glance made Ignát furious.

"What?" he roared, marching aggressively towards her.

"Do you wish to beat me?" she asked, without stirring from the spot, or moving an eyelash.

Ignát was accustomed to see people tremble before his wrath, and the sight of her composure was strange and offensive to him.

"Take that," he shouted, raising his hand. Without haste, but in good season, she stepped out of reach, then

seized his hand, pushed him away from her, and without raising her voice, she said:

"If you touch me, you shall never come near me again! I will not permit you to approach me!"

Her great eyes narrowed, and their keen, piercing gleam brought Ignát to his senses. He comprehended, from her countenance, that she, also, was a powerful wild beast, and if she took it into her head—she would have no further relations with him, even if she were beaten to death.

"Oh—you fantastic dreamer!" he bellowed, and took himself off.

But although he had given way to her once, he would not have done so a second time; he could not endure that a woman, and that woman his wife, should not bow down before him: that would have humiliated him. He would have felt that his wife would never, thenceforth, yield to him in anything, and that between him and her an obstinate struggle for the preëminence was bound to arise.

"All right! we'll see who is who," he said to himself on the following day, as he watched his wife with surly curiosity, and in his soul was already kindled a stormy desire to begin the battle, in order that he might the sooner enjoy the victory.

But four days later, Natálya Fomínishna announced to her husband that she was with child. Ignát quivered with joy, embraced her heartily, and said in a dull tone:

"That's my brave Natálya! Natásha—if it is a son! If you bear me a son—I'll cover you with gold! What do I say! I tell you plainly—I will be your slave! I promise it as in the presence of God! I'll lie down under your feet; stamp on me, if you will!"

"That will be according to God's will, not ours," she replied softly, and clearly.

"Yes—God's!" cried Ignát bitterly, and hung his head with sadness. From that moment forth he began to watch his wife as if she were a little child.

"Why did you sit down by the window? Look out—there is a draught on your side, and you will fall ill," he said to her severely yet affectionately. "Why do you run up and down stairs? You will shake yourself up to your injury. And you must eat more—you must eat for two, that he may have enough."

But pregnancy rendered Natálya still more concentrated and taciturn, she seemed to have withdrawn still further into herself, absorbed in the beating of the new life beneath her heart. But the smile on her lips grew clearer, and in her eyes there flashed up, at times, something new, weak and timid, like the first flush of the dawn.

When, at last, the time for her confinement arrived—it was early of an autumn morning—with the first cry of pain which broke from his wife, Ignát turned pale and tried to say something to her, but ended by merely waving his hand and leaving the chamber to go down stairs to the little room which had served his dead mother as an oratory. He ordered them to bring him vódka, seated himself at the table, and began to drink gloomily, as he listened to the bustle in the house, and to the groans of the sufferer which resounded from above. In the corner of the room, dimly illuminated by the flickering flame of the shrine-lamp, the faces of the holy pictures, dark and impassive, were obscurely outlined. There, above, over his head, feet stamped and shuffled, something heavy was dragged across the floor, dishes rattled, and people ran hastily up and down the staircase. Everything was done quickly and in haste, but time passed slowly. Subdued voices reached Ignát's ear:

"If she cannot be delivered—we must send to the church and have the doors of the sanctuary opened."

Vássúshka, a hanger-on of the house, entered the room adjoining that in which Ignát sat, and began to pray in a loud whisper:

"Oh Lord our God,—Who didst vouchsafe to come down from heaven and be born of the holy Birth-giver of God,—who knowest the infirmities of the human race—pardon Thy servant—."

Ignát cast gloomy glances at the holy pictures, sighed heavily and said:

"Is it possible that it will turn out to be a daughter again?"

From time to time he rose, stood stupidly in the middle of the room, and crossed himself in silence, bowing low before the holy pictures, then seated himself again at the table, drank vódka, which did not intoxicate him—at such times, dozed—and thus spent the evening, and the whole night, and the next morning, until midday—and lo, at last, the midwife ran hastily down from the chamber above, crying to him in a shrill, joyful voice:

"I congratulate you on a son, Ignát Matvyéevitch!"

"Are you telling the truth?" he said dully.

"Well, what's the matter with you, good sir!"

"With a sigh which proceeded from the full force of his broad chest, Ignát flung himself on his knees, and in a trembling voice he murmured, as he pressed his hands tightly to his breast:

"Glory to Thee, oh Lord! Thou hast not willed, it appears that my race should die out! My sins will not be left without justification in Thy sight. I thank Thee, oh Lord—okh!" And immediately rising to his feet, he began to give orders in stentorian tones:

"Hey! Send someone to St. Nicholas' Church for the priest! Say that Ignátiy Matvyéevitch desires his presence.

Ask him to be so good as to come and read the prayers for a woman who has given birth to a child."

A maid came to him, and said in troubled tones:

"Ignátiy Matvyéevitch! Natálya Fomínishna is asking for you. She feels badly—"

"Badly? how so? It will pass off!" he bellowed, his eyes sparkling with joy. "Tell her I will come at once! Tell her she's a fine fellow! Tell her she'll get her confinement-gift immediately! Wait! Prepare luncheon for the priest—send for my friend Mayákin!"

His huge form seemed to have grown larger, and intoxicated with joy, he flung himself awkwardly about the room; he smiled, rubbed his hands, cast glances of emotion at the holy pictures, and crossed himself with a flourish.

At last he went to his wife.

Then, the first thing he noticed was a tiny red body, which the midwife was washing in a tub. When he saw that, Ignát rose on the tips of his boot-toes, and putting his hands behind him, he drew near with cautious steps, and with lips amusingly puffed out. But it whimpered and floundered in the water, naked, helpless, pitifully—touching—

"What are you about—grasp him more carefully—for he hasn't any bones as yet," said Ignát to the midwife in a low and entreating tone. She laughed, opening her toothless mouth and, as it were, playing ball with the baby from hand to hand.

"You go off to your wife . . ."

He moved obediently towards the bed, and as he went inquired:

"Well, how goes it, Natálya?"

Then, as he reached the bed, he thrust aside the curtains which cast a shadow on it.

"I shall not survive it," said the gentle, hoarse voice. Ignát said nothing, as he gazed at his wife's face buried in the white pillow, over which, like dead serpents, were scattered her long dark locks. Yellow, lifeless, with black rings around the large, widely-opened eyes,—he did not recognize it. And the gaze of those terrible eyes, fixed immovably upon something afar off, beyond the wall,—was strange also to Ignát. His heart, seized with a heavy foreboding, ceased its joyful beating.

"Never mind, it's nothing,—it is always so,"—he said softly, bending over to kiss his wife. But she moaned straight in his face:

"I shall not survive it—"

Her lips were gray, cold, and when he touched them with his lips, he understood that death had already laid its hand upon her.

"Oh Lord!" he ejaculated in a frightened whisper, conscious that terror was throttling him and preventing his breathing.

"Natásha! What will he do? For he needs the mother's breast? Why do you behave so?"

He almost shouted at his wife. The midwife bustled about her; as she dandled the crying baby in the air, she talked to him in a persuasive tone, but he heard nothing, and could not tear his eyes away from his wife's dreadful face. Her lips moved, and he heard gentle words, but did not understand them. As he sat on the edge of the bed he said in a dull, and timid voice:

"Consider—he cannot get on without you—for he is a little baby! Take courage; drive away the thought! Drive it away——"

He spoke—but understood that his words were superfluous. Tears welled up within him, and something heavy

as a stone, cold as an iceberg came into being in his breast.

"Forgive me—farewell! Be careful—see that you don't drink . ." whispered Natálya almost inaudibly.

The priest came, and covering her face with something, he began, with a sigh, to read over her words of gentle entreaty:

"Oh Lord God Almighty, who healest every infirmity, heal also this Thy servant Natálya, who this day hath borne a child,—and raise her up from the bed whereon she lieth—for as spake the Prophet David: for in sin were we conceived, and we are all vile in Thy sight. . ."

The old man's voice gave way, his gaunt face was stern, and his garments gave forth an odor of incense.

"—preserve the child which hath been born of her from all evil, from every cruel thing, from every storm . . from evil spirits of the day and of the night. . ."

Ignát listened to the prayer and wept in silence. His tears, big and hot, fell upon his wife's bare arm; but her arm must have been insensible to the fall of the tears: it remained motionless, and the skin did not quiver from the dropping tears. Having received the prayer, Natálya became unconscious and died on the following day, without having said another word to anyone—died as taciturn as she had lived. After providing a magnificent funeral for his wife, Ignát had his son baptized, and named him Fomá, and, repressing his feelings, transferred the baby to the family of the godfather, his old friend Mayákin, whose wife had also had a child a short time previously. The death of his wife sowed many a gray hair in Ignát's thick, dark beard, but a new expression—a softly-gracious expression—made its appearance in the surly gleam of his eyes.

II

Mayakin lived in a vast, two-storey house, with a large garden, in which huge ancient linden-trees grew widely and luxuriantly. The thick branches covered the windows of the house with a close, dark lace-work, and the sun penetrated with difficulty through this curtain into the small rooms, closely set with varied furniture and large chests, so that a dense and austere twilight always reigned in the apartments. It was a devout family—and the odor of wax, incense and olive-oil for the shrine-lamps filled the house; sighs of penitence, words of prayer hovered in the air. All ceremonial observances were fulfilled accurately, with delight, and into them was injected the entire free force of soul of the mansion's inhabitants. Through the gloomy, stifling and heavy atmosphere of the rooms, almost without a rustle moved female forms clad in sombre gowns, bearing always an expression of spiritual contrition on their countenances, and wearing always soft slippers on their feet.

The family of Yákoff Tarásovitch Mayákin consisted of himself, his wife, his daughter and five female relatives, of whom the youngest was thirty-four years of age. They were all equally pious, lacking in individuality, and equally in subjection to Antonína Ivánovna, the mistress of the house, a tall, gaunt woman, with a swarthy face and stern gray eyes, whose gleam was authoritative and intelligent. Mayákin had also, a son, Tarás, but his name was never mentioned in the family, though the friends of the family knew

that from the time when the nineteen-year-old Tarás had gone to Moscow to pursue his studies and he had married there three years later, against his father's will, and Yákoff had disowned him, Tarás had disappeared and no one could tell where he was. It was rumored that he had been exiled to Siberia for some deed or other.

Yákoff Mayákin presented a very strange figure. Short of stature; thin and alert, with a small, fiery-red beard, the glance of his greenish, crafty eyes seemed to say to men collectively and individually:

"Never mind, sir! Do not feel uneasy! I understand you, but if you let me alone I'll not betray you."

His head resembled an egg in shape, and was large to deformity. His lofty forehead, furrowed with wrinkles, joined a bald spot, and it seemed as if this man had two faces,—a penetrating and intelligent face, with a long, cartilaginous nose, visible to all men,—and a second face, devoid of eyes and mouth, with nothing but wrinkles, behind which Mayákin appeared to be hiding both eyes and lips until the right time should arrive—and when it did arrive he would gaze upon the world with quite different eyes, and smile upon it with an entirely different smile.

He was the owner of a rope-walk, and had a small shop in town, near the wharves. In this shop, crammed to the very ceiling with ropes, cords, hemp and tow, he had a tiny den, with a squeaking glazed door. In this room stood a huge, ugly, old table, and before it a deep arm-chair covered with oil-cloth, in which Mayákin sat for days at a time, drinking tea and reading, over and over again, the same numbers of the "Moscow News," to which he had subscribed year after year, all his life. He enjoyed the respect of the merchant class, and the fame of a "brainy" man, and he was very fond of thrusting into evidence the antiquity of his family, saying in his hoarse voice:

"We Mayákins were merchants under Mother Katherine [1]—so I am a man of good blood."

In this family Ignát Gordyéeff's son spent six years. In his seventh year, Fomá was a big-headed, broadshouldered lad, who appeared older than his years, both in stature and in the gaze of his dark, almond-shaped eyes. Gentle, taciturn and persistent in his childish desires, he amused himself for days together with his playthings, in company with Mayákin's daughter Liúba, under the silent superintendence of one of the female relatives, a fat, pock-marked old spinster who, for some reason or other, was called "Lumpy." She was a thoroughly stupid creature, and appeared to be afraid of something; even with the children she spoke in a very low tone, using monosyllabic words. She knew a multitude of prayers, but never related a single fairy-tale to Fomá.

Fomá lived on friendly terms with the little girl, but when she angered him in any way, or teased him, he turned pale, his nostrils dilated, he opened his eyes ridiculously wide, and administered a violent beating to her. She wept, ran to her mother and complained to her, but Antonína loved Fomá, and paid very little heed to her daughter's complaints; which served to strengthen still more the children's friendship.

Fomá's day was long and monotonous. As soon as he had risen from bed and washed himself, he took up his stand before the holy images, and prompted in a whisper by pockmarked "Lumpy," he recited long prayers. Then they drank tea, and with it ate a great many white rolls made with milk, eggs and butter, flat cakes and patties.

[1] The Empress Katherine II. *Mátushka*, "mother," or "dear little mother," is a term of affectionate respect to superiors or equals.—*Translator.*

After tea—in summer—the children betook themselves to the huge, overgrown garden, which sloped down to a ravine, whose bottom was always dark. The ravine exhaled dampness and something which inspired dread. The children were not allowed to approach even the brink of the ravine, and this fact inspired them with terror of it. In winter, from the hour of morning tea until dinner, they played in the house, if it was very cold out of doors, or went out and coasted down huge ice-hills. They dined at midday—"Russian fashion," as Mayákin said. First a huge tureen of greasy cabbage-soup with slices of rye bread which had been dried in the oven floating in it, was placed on the table; but there was no meat in it. Next they ate the same soup with meat cut up in small bits; then came the roast—a pig, a goose, veal or pig-belly stuffed with buckwheat groats; then came another tureen of "pluck" or vermicelli soup: and all this wound up with some sort of sweet dish, or one made of butter, eggs and milk. They drank kvas,[1] either cranberry, juniper or rye,—Antonína Ivánovna always had several sorts on hand. They ate in silence, merely sighing now and then with weariness; a separate bowl of soup for two was provided for the children, while all the elder people ate from the other. Stupefied by this meal, they lay down for a nap, and for the next two or three hours nothing was to be heard in Mayákin's house but snores and somnolent sighs.

When they woke up, they drank tea, and after tea they discussed the news of the town, the church choristers, the deacons, the weddings, the disgraceful conduct of one merchant or another of their acquaintance.—After tea Mayákin would say to his wife:

[1] A non-intoxicating beverage generally made of rye meal, or some rye bread with water and fermented.—*Translator.*

"Well, now, mother, fetch hither the Bible."

Most frequently of all Yákoff Tarásovitch read the Book of Job. After he had placed on his huge nose, in shape like the beak of a bird of prey, a pair of spectacles with heavy silver rims, he stared at all present in turn to see whether they were all in their places.

There they all sat, where he was accustomed to see them, and their faces bore the dull and timorous expression of piety which he knew so well.

"There was a man in the Land of Uz," began Mayákin in his hoarse voice, and Fomá, who sat beside Liúba on the divan in the corner of the room, knew that his god-father would immediately pause and stroke his bald spot. As he sat and listened, he pictured to himself that man from the land of Uz. The man was tall and naked, his eyes were immense, like those of the holy image of the Saviour-not-made-with-hands, and his voice was like a huge brass trumpet, like those which soldiers play upon in camp. The man grew bigger every minute; he shot up to the very sky, and plunged his hands into the clouds, and rending them apart, shouted in a terrible voice:

"Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in with darkness?"

Fomá was frightened and began to tremble: his drowsiness fled, he heard the voice of his god-father, who remarked with fine sarcasm, as he plucked at his beard:

"Well, he was very daring."

Fomá knew that his god-father was saying this concerning the man from the land of Uz, and his god-father's smile calmed the boy. That man would not break down the sky or tear it in pieces with his terrible hands. And again Fomá saw the man;—he was sitting on the ground, "his body was clothed with worms, and clods of dust; his

skin was broken and become loathsome." But now he was small and pitiful, he was just like the poor beggars on the church steps.

Now he speaks:

"What is man that thou shouldest magnify him, and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him?"

"He was deemed worthy—the righteous man," said the female auditors with a sigh. Yákoff Mayákin stared at them, grinning, and said:

"Fools . . . Take those children away to bed."

Ignát came to Mayákin's house every day, brought his son playthings, seized him in his arms and squeezed him, but now and then, he said to him with displeasure, and with badly-dissimulated uneasiness:

"Why are you such a shy fellow? Phe—e—ew! Why don't you laugh more?"

And he complained to his crony:

"I'm afraid Fomá takes after his mother. His eyes are not merry. Any more than hers were."

"It's very early for you to feel uneasy," laughed Mayákin.

He also loved his godson, and when, one day, Ignát announced to him that he was going to take Fomá home with him, Mayákin was genuinely distressed.

"Leave him here," he entreated. "You see—the little lad has become used to our ways: he'll cry there—"

"He'll stop that after a while,—I didn't beget a son for your benefit. The atmosphere in your house is heavy,—tedious, exactly as in a forest-monastery of Old Believers. It is injurious to the child. And it is not cheerful for me without him. When I come home,—the house is empty. I don't want to look at anything. I can't move over to your house for his sake—I'm not bound to order my life

to suit him, but he is bound to conform to my ideas. That's the state of the case. Moreover, my sister Anfísa has come to live with me now—there will be some one to look after him."

So the little boy was taken to his father's house.

There he was received by a ridiculous old woman, with a long, hooked nose, and a huge, toothless mouth. She was tall, round-shouldered, clad in a gray gown, her gray hair covered with a black silk cap, and at first the boy did not like her—was even afraid of her. But when he saw her black eyes smiling at him out of her wrinkled visage,—he immediately thrust his head confidingly on her knees.

"My poor little orphan!" she said in a velvety voice, which quivered from fulness of resonance, and passed her hand gently over his face. "Why, how he clings—my dear child!"

There was something peculiarly sweet and soft in her caress, something entirely new to Fomá, and he gazed into the old woman's eyes with curiosity and expectation depicted on his little face. The old woman introduced him into a world which was new and hitherto unknown to him. The first day, when she put him to bed, she sat down beside him, bent over the child and asked him:

"Shall I tell you a fairy-story, Fómushka?"

And from that time forth Fomá always fell asleep to the velvety sounds of the old woman's voice, conjuring up before him the life of enchantment. Epic heroes who conquered monsters, wise daughters of Kings, fools who proved themselves wiser still—whole throngs of new and wondrous personages passed in review before the fascinated imagination of the boy, and eagerly nourished his soul with the healthy beauty of popular creative power. Inexhaustible were the treasures of memory and fancy in this old woman,

who often through his dreamy dozing, appeared to the boy to resemble now the Witch-Woman of the legends—only a good and kind Witch-Woman; or again the beautiful Vasilísa Most-Wise. With eyes very wide open, and holding his breath, the boy stared through the nocturnal gloom which filled the chamber, and beheld it quiver gently from the spark-like flame of the shrine-lamp, which burned in front of the holy picture.—And Fomá peopled it with wonderful pictures of the life of fairyland. Speechless but living shadows crept along the walls and across the floor, and the boy watched their life with fear and delight, and endowed them with forms, with colors—and after having created life from them—with one movement of his eyelashes, he destroyed it, in the twinkling of an eye. Some new element made its appearance in his dark eyes—something more childlike and ingenuous, less serious; solitude and darkness, by awakening in him a painful feeling of expectancy of something or other, troubled, and excited his curiosity, made him retreat to a dark corner, and peer into it to discover what was hidden there, under the thick mantle of gloom? He went, found nothing, but never abandoned the hope that he might find something . .

As for his father,—he feared and respected him. Ignát's huge size, his trumpet-like, bubbling voice, his bearded face, his head in its thick cap of gray hair, his long, sturdy arms, and flashing eyes—all these imparted to Ignát a likeness to the robbers of the fairy-tales.

Fomá quivered when he heard his voice, or his firm, heavy footsteps; but when his father, smiling amiably and shouting something tender until the walls rang again, took him upon his knees, or tossed him high in the air with his broad palms—the little boy's fear vanished.

One day, when he was already in his eighth year, he

asked his father, who had just returned from a prolonged journey in some direction:

"Daddy! Where have you been?"

"Travelling on the Vólga."

"Robbing—as a pirate?" asked Fomá quietly.

"Wha—at?" said Ignát slowly, and his brows quivered.

"But you are a pirate, aren't you, daddy? You see, I know"—said Fomá with a sly wink, delighted to have so easily guessed his father's life which was a secret to him.

"I am—a merchant!" said Ignát sternly; but after thinking the matter over, he smiled good-naturedly, and added: "and you are a little fool! I deal in grain, I run steamers . . . you have seen the 'Yermák?' Well then, that steamer belongs to me—and to you."

"It's awfully big," remarked Fomá, with a sigh.

"Well, I'll buy you a little one, as long as you are little yourself . . . Shall I?"

"All right!" assented Fomá, but after a thoughtful silence he began again, slowly, with regret:

"But I thought you were a pirate al-so, like a hero . ."

"I tell you that I am a merchant!" repeated Ignát impressively, and the look which he bent on the disappointed face of his son was rather displeased and almost timid.

"Like old Feódor, who peddles rolls?" asked Fomá, after he had thought it over.

"Well, yes, like him—only I am richer, I have a great deal more money than Feódor has."

"A great deal of money?"

"Well—some people have more."

"How many casks have you?"

"Of what?"

"Of money?"

"You little fool! Is money measured by casks?"

"How else?" exclaimed Fomá vivaciously, and turning his face towards his father, he began hastily to tell him: "Why the brigand Máksimka entered one town, and filled twelve casks with money at the house of a rich man there —and got a lot of silver, and robbed the church . . . and chopped up one man with his sword, and flung him down from the belfry,—because the man was beginning to ring an alarm-peal . . ."

"Did your aunt tell you all that?" inquired Ignát, admiring his son's animation.

"Yes, what of it?"

"Nothing!" replied Ignát, with a laugh. "So you actually have promoted your father to a pirate——"

"But perhaps you were one sometime, long ago?" Fomá reverted to his first idea, and from his face it was plain that he very strongly desired to receive an affirmative answer.

"I never was—drop that."

"You never were?"

"Don't I tell you that I never was! What a boy you are! Is it nice to be a pirate? Pirates are all sinners. They don't believe in God—they rob churches—they are all anathematized in the churches. Well—now—I'll tell you what, my son, you must go to school! It's high time, my boy, you are nearly nine years old. So begin, and God be with you. You shall study all winter, and in the spring I will take you for a voyage on the Vólga with me."

"Am I to go to school?" asked Fomá timidly.

"You shall study at home first, with your aunt."

And soon the boy sat down in the morning at his table, and drawing his finger over the Slavonic alphabet, began to repeat after his aunt:

"Az (a) . . buki (b) . . vyedi (v)——"

When they reached *bra, vra, gra, dra,* the boy was unable, for a long time, to read these syllables without laughing. Fomá mastered all this wisdom easily, almost without an effort, and soon he began to read the first psalm of the first selection from the Psalter:

"Bles-sed is the man,——who hath not wal-ked—— in the coun-sel of the un-god-ly . . ."

"That's it, my darling, that's it! That's exactly right, Fómushka!" his aunt kept repeating to him with loving delight at his progress.

"You're a smart fellow, Fomá!" said Ignát approvingly and seriously, when he was informed of his son's progress. "In the spring we will go to Astrakhan, for fish, and in the autumn you shall go to school!"

The boy's life ran on as smoothly as a ball rolls down hill. His aunt was not only his teacher but his comrade in his play. Liúba Mayákin came; and in their society the old woman was transformed into just such another merry child as they. They played at hide and seek, and blind man's buff: it pleased and amused the children to see Anfísa, her eyes blinded with a kerchief, and her arms widely extended, stalking cautiously about the room, yet stumbling against the tables and chairs; or creeping into divers commodious corners in search of them, and saying:

"Oh the rogues, oh the brigands! where have they hidden themselves? Hey?"

And the sun shone gaily and amiably upon that aged, worn-out body, which had preserved its youthful spirit, upon the old life which was embellishing, to the best of its powers and understanding, the life-path of two children.

Ignát went off early to the Exchange, sometimes did not make his appearance until it was almost evening, and in the evening went to the city council, to the houses of his

friends or to some other place. Sometimes he arrived at home in a state of intoxication. At first, Fomá ran away and hid from him on such occasions; afterwards he grew accustomed to it, and liked his father that way even better than when he was sober: he was kinder, simpler and rather absurd. If this happened at night the boy was always awakened by his father's trumpet-like voice:

"Anfísa—a! My own sister! Let me go to my son—to my heir—let me in!"

"Go away, go away,—get to sleep, you impious fiend! Have you been getting drunk again, hey? Why, your hair is gray . . ."

"Anfísa? Can't I see my son? Just a peep, with one eye?"

"May both your eyes burst with your drunkenness!"

Fomá knew that his aunt would not admit his father, and fell asleep again, lulled by their voices. But when Ignát made his appearance in a state of intoxication by day,—his huge paws immediately seized upon his son, and with a drunken, happy smile the father carried Fomá about the house, and asked him:

"Fómka! What do you want? Speak! Presents? Toys? Come, ask me! For you know—there's nothing in the world that I will not buy for you. I have a million! Ha, ha, ha! And there will be still more! Do you understand? All is yours. Ha, ha!"

And all of a sudden his ecstasy was extinguished, as a candle is extinguished by a strong gust of wind. His drunken face quivered, his reddened eyes, filled with tears, and his lips expanded in a timid, depressed smile.

"Anfísa! What if he were to die—what should I do then?"

And, after these words, rage overpowered him.

"I'll burn up everything!" he roared, fixing his eyes wildly on some spot in a dark corner of the room.—"I'll destroy everything! I'll blow it up with powder!"

"Stop that, you ugly phiz! Do you wish to scare the child? Do you wish to make him fall ill?" exhorted Anfísa: and this was enough to make Ignát disappear in a trice, muttering:

"Well—well—well! I'm going, I'm going—only don't scream at me! Don't make such a row—don't frighten him . ."

And if Fomá did not feel well, his father, abandoning all his business, never left the house, and worried his sister and his son with stupid questions and advice, strode about the house with terror depicted in his eyes, quite unlike himself, and groaned.

"Why do you anger God?" said Anfísa. "Look out, or your grumbling will reach the Lord's ear and He will chastize you for your complaints about His mercies towards you."

"Eh, sister!" sighed Ignát. "Just imagine——if anything were to happen to him—my whole life would be ruined! What have I lived for? I don't know . . ."

Similar scenes and abrupt transitions in his father from one mood to another frightened the boy at first, but he soon became accustomed to them, and when, from the window, he beheld his father alighting from his sledge, he would remark indifferently:

"Aunty! Daddy has come home drunk again!"

Spring came, and Ignát, in fulfilment of his promise, took his son with him on the steamer, and a new life, rich in impressions, unrolled itself before Fomá's vision.

Swiftly down stream floated the handsome and powerful

"Yermák," merchant Gordyéeff's steam-tug, and on both sides of it the shores of that mighty beauty, the Vólga, moved to meet it,—the left shore all bathed in sunshine, extended to the very horizon, like a splendid green carpet, while the right thrust its cliffs, overgrown with forest, up into the sky, and sank into surly repose.

Between them, in a magnificent sweep, flowed the broad-breasted Vólga; triumphantly, without haste flow her waters, conscious of their unconquerable power; the hill-shore was reflected in them like a dark shadow, but on the left side she was adorned with gold and emerald velvet by the sandy borders of the reefs, and the broad meadows. Now here, now there, on the hills, and in the meadows, appeared villages, the sun sparkled in the window-panes of the cottages, and upon the roofs of yellow straw; the crosses of the churches gleamed through the foliage of the trees, the gray wings of the mills rotated lazily through the air, the smoke from the chimneys of a factory curled skyward in thick black wreaths. Throngs of children in blue, red and white blouses, stood upon the bank, greeting the steamer with loud shouts which awakened the river from its quietude; and from under the steamer's wheels, merry waves flowed swiftly to the feet of the children and plashed upon the shore. Here a whole covey of children had seated themselves in a boat, and rowed hastily into midstream, in order that they might rock upon the waves as upon the surge of the sea. Above the surface of the water peeped forth the crests of trees, sometimes whole clumps of them, drowned in the spring flood, and stood up amid the water like islands. From some spot on the bank, with a heavy sigh, rang out the mournful song:

"O—eh—o—o—o—heave-ho—once more!"

The steamer passed rafts, splashing them with water.

The logs moved steadily and continuously onward propelled by the surge of the recurring waves; the raftsmen in their blue blouses, as they tottered with the shock, gazed at the steamer and laughed and shouted inaudible remarks. A handsome, big-bodied, flat-bottomed barge, put together with wooden pegs, floated sideways down the river: the yellow planks with which it was laden shone like gold, and were dimly reflected in the turbid water of the spring flood. A passenger-steamer coming to meet them whistled, and the dull echo of the whistle lost itself in the forest, in the clefts of the hill-shore, and died away there. In the middle of the stream, the waves from the two steamers came together and beat against their sides, and the vessels rocked on the water. On the slopes of the hill-shore stretched green carpets of winter-sown grain, brown strips of fallow land, and black strips ploughed for spring grain. Birds, like little specks in air, hovered over them, and were plainly visible against the blue expanse of sky; a flock was grazing near at hand,—from a distance it appeared like a toy flock, and the tiny figure of the shepherd stood supported on his staff gazing at the river.

On all sides was the gleaming water, on all sides were space and freedom, cheerfully-green meadows, and graciously-clear blue sky; in the quiet motion of the water, restrained power could be felt; in the heaven above it shone the beautiful sun, the air was saturated with the fragrance of evergreen trees, and the fresh scent of foliage. The shores advanced in greeting, soothing the eye and the soul with their beauty, and new pictures were constantly unfolded upon them.

On everything round about rested the stamp of a certain sluggishness: everything—nature and people—lived awkwardly, lazily;—but in this laziness there was a certain

peculiar grace and, it would seem that behind the laziness was concealed a huge force, an unconquerable force, as yet unconscious of itself, not having, as yet, created for itself clear desires and aims. . . . And the absence of consciousness in this half-somnolent existence cast upon its whole beautiful expanse a shade of melancholy. Submissive patience, the silent expectation of something new and more active was audible even in the call of the cuckoo, as it flew with the wind from the shore, over the river. The mournful songs, also, seemed to entreat aid from some one. And, at times, the audacity of despair rang through them. The river made answer to the songs with sighs. And the crests of the trees rocked pensively . . . Silence.—

Fomá passed entire days on the captain's bridge with his father. Silently, with eyes very wide open, he gazed at the endless panorama of the shores, and it seemed to him that he was moving along a broad silver pathway towards those wondrous kingdoms where dwelt the enchanters and epic heroes of the familiar fairy-tales. At times he attempted to interrogate his father about what he saw. Ignát answered him willingly and in detail, but his answers did not please the boy: they contained nothing interesting or comprehensible to him, and he heard nothing concerning what he would have liked to hear. One day he announced to his father, with a sigh:

"Aunty Anfísa knows better than you do."

"What does she know?" inquired Ignát, laughing.

"Everything," replied the boy with conviction.

The wondrous kingdoms did not make their appearance. But towns frequently appeared on the banks of the stream, towns precisely like the one in which Fomá lived. Some of them were larger, some smaller; but the people, the houses, the churches—everything in them was exactly the

same as in his native town. Fomá inspected them in his father's company, was dissatisfied with them, and returned to the steamer cross and tired.

"Tomorrow we shall reach Astrakhan," said Ignát one day.

"And it—is it like all the others?"

"Well, yes, of course . . . but what of that?"

"And beyond it—what is there?"

"The sea—the Caspian Sea it is called."

"And what is there in it?"

"Fish, you queer creature! What can there be in the water?"

"The city of Kitezh stands in the water."

"That—that's quite a different thing! In Kitezh dwelt only upright people."

"And there are no upright towns in the water?"

"No," said Ignát, and added after a pause: "it is sea water—it is bitter, and cannot be drunk."

"And beyond the sea—are there more countries?"

"Of course; don't you suppose the sea must have limits? It is like a bowl."

"And are there more towns there?"

"Yes—but what of that? Only, it's no longer our country there, but Persia. You have seen the Persians at the Fair,[1] dealing in dried peaches and apricots and pistachio nuts?"

"Yes, I have seen them," replied Fomá, and became pensive.

One day he asked his father:

"Is there much more land?"

[1] The Fair of Níghny Nóvgorod, where the scene is chiefly laid we may assume; although the *name* of the town is never mentioned in the story.—*Translator.*

"A great deal more, my dear boy! If you were to traverse all of it afoot,—why, you couldn't walk round it all in ten years." Ignát talked a long time to his son about the magnitude of the earth, and wound up by saying:

"And still no one knows how much there is of it, or where it ends."

"And is everything alike all over it?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"Towns and all that—"

"Well, of course there are towns and towns . . Houses, streets,—and everything as it should be."

After a number of these conversations the boy began to stare less frequently and intently into the distance with an inquiring gaze in his black eyes.

The crew of the steamer loved him, and he loved all those fine fellows, browned with sun and wind, who jested merrily with him. They rigged up for him divers fishing apparatus, made boats of bark, amused him, rowed him about on the river during their halts, while Ignát went off to the town on business. The boy often heard them scolding about his father, but he paid no particular attention to this, and never repeated to his father what he had heard about him. But one day, in Astrakhan, when the steamer was taking on wood for fuel, Fomá heard the voice of Petróvitch, the engineer:

"He ordered us to take on as much wood—phew; he's a ridiculous man! He loads the steamer to the very deck and then storms . . . 'You're ruining the machinery,' he says, 'you pour on too much oil altogether—'"

The voice of the grayhaired, surly pilot replied:

"And his greed is boundless—fuel is cheap here, so he's trying . . . He's a greedy devil!"

"Oh, a regular curmudgeon!"

This word, repeated several times in succession, fixed itself in Fomá's memory, and in the evening, as he was eating supper with his father, he suddenly said to him:

"Daddy!"

"What?"

"Are you greedy?"

In reply to his father's questions he repeated to him the conversation between the pilot and the engineer. Ignát's face clouded over, and his eyes flashed with anger.

"So that's what they say!" he ejaculated, shaking his head. "Well, never you mind—don't listen to them. They're not fit companions for you,—keep away from them. You are their master, they are your servants, if you must know it. If you and I take a fancy, we can fling every man Jack of them ashore—they come cheap, and they are as plentiful everywhere as dogs with unclipped tails. Do you understand? They may say a lot of evil about me. But what they'll say later on is—that I'm completely their master. This whole business arises from the fact that I am lucky and rich, and everyone envies rich men. The fortunate man is regarded as everyone's enemy."

A couple of days later a new pilot and a new engineer made their appearance on the steamer.

"Where is Yákoff?" asked the boy.

"I have paid him off—dismissed him."

"What for?" asked Fomá wonderingly.

"For that same affair."

"And Petróvitch?"

"Has gone the same road."

Fomá was delighted that his father was able so promptly to change the men on the steamer. He smiled at his father, and going to the lower deck, he approached a sailor who was sitting on a log, and ravelling out a bit of rope to make a swab.

"We've got a new pilot," announced Fomá.

"I know it. I hope you're well, Fomá Ignátievitch! How did you sleep, and did you rest well?"

"And a new engineer . ."

"Yes . . Are you sorry for Petróvitch?"

"No."

"No? But he was very kind to you."

"But why did he abuse my daddy?"

"Oh? Did he abuse him?"

"Yes, for I heard him."

"Hum-m! And your father heard him also, of course?"

"No, I told him about it."

"You . . Well!" drawled the sailor, stopped short, and fell to work again.

"And my daddy says: 'You're the master here . . you can discharge them all, if you wish,' he says."

"Just so," remarked the sailor, staring gloomily at the boy, who was so vivaciously bragging to him about his power. From that day forth Fomá observed that the crew assumed a different attitude towards him, somehow, from the one they had held previously: some became more obliging and amiable, others would not speak to him, or if they spoke it was angrily and not at all in an amusing way as it had been before. Fomá liked to watch them scrub the deck; with their trousers rolled up to their knees —when they were not discarded altogether—the sailors, armed with swabs and brushes, ran skilfully about the deck, flung water on it from buckets, splashed each other, laughed, shouted, tumbled down—streams of water flowed in every direction, and the lively uproar of the men mingled with their cheerful plashing. Before this the boy not only had never been in the sailors' way during this playful and easy work, but he had taken an active share, pour-

ing water over them, and laughingly fleeing before their threats to duck him. But after Yákoff and Petróvitch's dismissal, he felt that he was now in everybody's way, no one wished to play with him, and everyone looked ungraciously at him. Surprised and saddened, he left the deck and went up to the pilot house, sat down there and began to gaze pensively and with a sense of affront, at the distant blue shore, and the jagged strip of forest upon it. Meanwhile, down on the deck below, the water splashed playfully and the sailors laughed merrily. He wanted very much to go to them, but something kept him from doing so.

"Keep away from them,"—he recalled his father's words: "You are their master."

Then he felt like shouting something at the sailors—something threatening and masterful, such as his father was in the habit of shouting at them. For a long time he meditated on what it should be. And he could think of nothing. Two days—three days more passed, and by that time he clearly understood that the crew did not like him. After this he found life on the steamer very tiresome, and more and more frequently, from out of the motley-hued mist of his new impressions, stood forth before Fomá the image which had been overshadowed by them, of his kind and loving aunt Anfísa, with her stories, her smiles and her soft, resonant laughter, that breathed into the boy's soul a cheering warmth. He still lived in the world of fairy-tales, but the invisible and pitiless hand of reality was already zealously tearing away the beautiful and delicate web of the marvellous, through which the boy gazed on everything around him; Fomá's eyes grew more keen: a conscious desire to investigate made its appearance in them, and the thirst to understand began to resound in the questions he put to his father—to under-

stand what threads and springs regulate the actions of men?

One day this scene was enacted in his presence: the sailors were carrying wood and one of them, young, curly-headed and jolly Efím, as he traversed the deck with the pole-barrow, said in a loud and angry tone:

"No, this is downright remorseless! I made no contract to haul wood. A sailor—that's all right, your work is plain enough,—but haul wood to boot—not much! It's the same as flaying me of the skin which I didn't sell:—it's outrageous! A nice sort of master he is, to suck the very marrow out of folks!"

The boy heard this grumbling and knew that it referred to his father. He saw too, that although Efím grumbled, he had more wood on his poles than the others, and walked faster. None of the sailors made any reply to Efím's grumbling, and even the one who was his partner with the poles remained silent, merely protesting now and then at the zeal with which Efím loaded the wood on the poles.

"Enough!" he said surlily: "You're not loading a horse!"

"And do you hold your tongue. You're yoked, so don't kick over the traces.—And if he does suck the blood out of you—still, hold your tongue—what can you say?"

All at once Ignát made his appearance, no one knew whence, stepped up to the sailor and taking up his stand in front of him, inquired gruffly:

"What are you talking about?"

"I'm talking,—evidently,—as best I can," replied Efím stammering. "There was no bargain that I should remain dumb. . ."

"And who is it that's going to suck that blood?" inquired Ignát, stroking his beard.

The sailor, perceiving that he had put his foot in it, and that there was no way of wriggling out of the scrape, flung down the piece of wood, wiped his hands on his trousers and looking Ignát straight in the face, said boldly:

"And ain't I right? Aren't you going to suck it . ."

"I?"

"Yes, you."

Fomá saw his father raise his hand,—a sort of piercing shriek rang out, and the sailor fell heavily on the fire-wood. He rose to his feet again immediately, and went on with his work in silence. Blood dripped from his wounded face upon the white bark of the birch logs; he wiped it off with the sleeve of his blouse, looked at the sleeve, and sighed, but held his peace. And when he passed Fomá with the poles laden with wood, two large, turbid tears quivered on his face, and on the bridge of his nose, and the boy saw them.

As he ate his dinner with his father, he was thoughtful, and scrutinized Ignát with fear in his eyes.

"Why do you frown?" asked his father affectionately.

"Because——"

"Perhaps you feel ill?"

"No."

"Good. If's there's anything the matter with you, speak out."

"You are very strong," said the boy all at once, in a thoughtful manner.

"I? Oh fairly—God has not been unkind to me on that score."

"Wha-at a crack you hit him a while ago!" exclaimed the boy softly, hanging his head.

Ignát was carrying to his mouth a piece of bread smeared with caviar, but his hand paused, stopped short by his son's

exclamation; he looked inquiringly at his boy's bowed head, and inquired:

"You mean—Efímka?"

"Yes—you brought blood—and he wept as he walked afterwards," went on the boy in a low tone.

"Mm-m," growled Ignát, as he chewed his mouthful. "Well—are you sorry for him?"

"Sorry!" said Fomá, with tears in his voice.

"Well—you see—" said Ignát. Then, after a pause, he poured out a glass of brandy, drank it, and began sternly and impressively:

"There's no occasion for pitying him. He was bawling without cause, and he got what he deserved. I know him: he's a good lad, zealous, robust, and—no fool. But it's not his place to pass judgment: I can do that, for I'm the master. 'Tis no easy thing to be the master. He'll not die of that whack, but he'll be the wiser for it. That's the state of the case. Eh, Fomá! You're a child—and you do not understand at all—and I must teach you how to live. Perhaps I have not much longer to live on earth."

Ignát paused, drank some more liquor, and began again argumentatively:

"You do well to pity people. Only, you must use judgment with your pity. First consider the man, find out what he is like, what use can be made of him. And if you see that he is a strong and capable man, help him if you like. But if a man is weak, not inclined to work—spit on him and go your way. And you must know that when a man complains about everything, and cries out and groans,—he's not worth more than two kopéks, he's not worthy of pity, and will be of no use to you if you do help him! . . . and the others will only get soured and will be spoiled by your pity for him. When you lived with your god-father, you

had a chance to see all sorts of riff-raff: those pilgrims, female parasites, unfortunate folks . . . and various sorts of rabble. Forget them—they are not people, and they are good for nothing like nut-shells in the world. They're a sort of fleas, bugs and other filth. And they do not live for God—they have no God, and in vain do they call upon His name, to move fools to pity, that they may fill their bellies through people's compassion. They live for their bellies, and they do not know how to do anything except to drink, and gobble, and eat, and snore—and all you get from them is the ruin of your soul. They'll be a stumbling-block for you, that's all. And a good man among them is like a sound apple among rotten ones—he is likely to be speedily spoiled, and no one will be the gainer by it. But you are very young—you cannot understand my words. . . Do you aid the man who in misfortune is a stoic—perhaps he will not ask your aid, so do you guess his need of it yourself, and help him without his having asked; but if anyone is proud, and is likely to take offense at your aid—do not let him know that you are helping him. That's the way to behave sensibly!

"For instance, take an affair like this. Two planks lie in the mud,—one rotten, the other a fine, sound block. In such a case, what ought you to do? Of what use is a rotten plank? Let it alone, leave it lying in the mud, you can walk on it to keep your feet from getting dirty. But if the board is sound—pick it up, and lay it in the sun; it will be of use to some one else if not to you. That's the way, my little son! Hearken to me and remember. Well, now—there's no occasion for pitying Efímka—he's a practical fellow, he understands his own value,—you won't knock the soul out of him with one box on the ear. Now I'm going to keep my eyes on him for a week, and then

I'll promote him to be steersman, and before you know it, he'll be pilot—and if he's made captain it won't daunt him —he'll make a clever captain. That's the way men grow up. I've been through that school myself, my dear fellow, and swallowed a good lot of thumps myself, when I was of his age. Life is not an affectionate mother to us all, my dear son, but she is our stern mistress."

Ignát talked for a couple of hours with his son, told him about his youth, his labors, men and their terrible power and weakness, how they love and delight to pretend that they are unfortunate, in order that they may live at the expense of others; then again about himself, how from a common laborer he had risen to be the head of a great business.

The boy listened to him, stared at him, and felt that somehow, his father was coming nearer to him every moment. And although his father's narratives contained none of the elements in which Anfísa's stories abounded, on the other hand, they had in them something new,—something clearer and more comprehensible than the stories had, and no less interesting than they. A warm, strong feeling began to beat in his little heart, and drew him to his father. Ignát must have divined this sentiment from his son's eyes: he rose abruptly from his seat, seized him in his arms, and pressed him close to his breast. And Fomá threw his arms around his father's neck, and pressing his cheek to his cheek, remained silent, breathing more quickly than before.

"My dear little son," whispered Ignát softly. "My darling—my joy—learn well while I am alive—Ekh—life is hard!"

The child's heart quivered at that whisper, set his teeth, and hot tears gushed from his eyes.

Up to that day Ignát had never awakened in his son any particular feelings. The boy had grown used to him, had surveyed his huge form, had been rather afraid of him and, at the same time, had known that his father would do anything in the world for him that he might ask. It had sometimes happened that Ignát had been absent from home one day, two days, a week, or the whole summer—Fomá never had seemed to notice his absence, engrossed as he was in love for his aunt. When Ignát made his appearance the boy rejoiced, but he could hardly have told why—whether at his father's coming, or at the playthings which the latter brought. But now, at the sight of Ignát, Fomá ran to meet him, grasped his hand, gazed laughingly in his face, and found himself very dull if he did not see his father for two or three hours. His father had become interesting to him, and by rousing his curiosity, had simultaneously developed love and respect for himself. Every time that they found themselves together Fomá asked his father:

"Daddy! Tell me about yourself."

The steamer was on its way up the Vólga. On one stifling July night, when the sky was covered with thick black clouds, and everything about the Vólga seemed ominously quiet, they arrived at Kazán, and anchored near Uslón, at the tail end of a huge caravan of vessels. The screech of the anchor-chains and the shouts of the crew wakened Fomá; he looked out of the window, and saw far away, in the gloom, tiny lights gleaming and twinkling; the water was black and thick as oil,—and that was all that he could see. The boy's heart contracted painfully, and he began to listen attentively. A barely audible, mournful song, monotonous and depressing as a dirge, floated to his ear from some indefinite spot; the watchmen on the caravan exchanged shouts; the steamer hissed angrily, as it let off steam—and

the black water of the river splashed sadly and softly against the sides of the vessels. By staring intently into the darkness, until his eyes ached, the boy was able to make out black masses and small lights, dimly flickering high above them. He knew that these were barges, but this knowledge did not calm him, and his heart beat unevenly, and dark, alarming images surged up in his imagination.

"O—o—o."

The long-drawn cry rang out from afar, and ended in a sort of moan. Now some one walked across the deck, to the side of the steamer.

"O—o—o."

Again it rang out, but it was nearer now.

"Yafím!" they said in a low tone on deck: "Yafímka!"

"We-ell!"

"The devil! Get up! Take the boat hook."

"O—o—o—o" groaned the sound close at hand, and Fomá, with a shudder, staggered away from the window.

The strange sound floated nearer and nearer, and increased in strength, sobbing and melting away in the dense darkness. And on deck they whispered anxiously:

"Yafímka! Do get up!—a visitor is coming!"

"Where?" rang out the hurried question—then bare feet shuffled across the deck, a bustle became audible, and past the boy's face two boat hooks glided from above and almost noiselessly plunged into the thick water.

"A vi-i-si-tor!" came a moaning cry near at hand, and then came a soft but very strange plashing of water.

The boy quivered with terror at this mournful cry, but could not tear his hands from the window, and his eyes from the water.

"Light the lantern—we can't see at all."

"Immediately."

Then a spot of troubled light fell upon the water. Fomá saw that the water was surging gently, and a ripple was running over it, as though it were in pain and were quivering with anguish.

"Look—look!" the men on the deck whispered in terror.

At that moment, in the circle of light upon the water there appeared a huge, dreadful face, with grinning white teeth. It floated and rocked on the water, its teeth were aimed straight at Fomá, and seemed to be saying to him, with a smile:

"Eh, my lad, my lad, 'tis co-old—farewell!"

The boat hooks trembled, rose in the air, and then descended into the water, and began cautiously to push into something.

"Guide it—guide it—look out—it will get into the paddle wheel."

"Give it a shove yourself."

The boat hooks slid along the bulwark, and caught hold of the thing simultaneously, with a sound like the gnashing of teeth. Fomá could not close his eyes as he stared at them. The clatter of feet, as they tramped along the deck, overhead, gradually withdrew to the bow. And then again rang out that moaning sound, like a funeral dirge:

"A Vi-i-isitor!"

"Daddy!" shrieked Fomá in a ringing voice. "Daddy!"

His father sprang to his feet, and ran to him.

"What is it? What are they doing out there?" screamed Fomá.

Ignát, with vast strides rushed out of the cabin, yelling savagely. He soon returned, before Fomá, tottering and

gazing around him in terror, had got from the window to his father's bed.

"They have frightened you—well, never mind!" said Ignát, taking him by the hand. "Get into bed with me."

"What is it?" asked Fomá softly.

"Nothing, my son. It was a drowned man. A man has been drowned, and was floating—it was nothing. Don't you be afraid, he has already floated away."

"Why did they shove him?" the boy persisted in his questions, pressing close to his father, and covering his eyes to keep out the terror.

"Why—because it had to be done. The water would drive him into a paddle-wheel—our wheel, for example—and tomorrow the police would spy it out,—and there would be a row, and questions, and they would detain us here. So they helped him to journey farther. What difference does it make to him? He's already dead—it doesn't injure him, it doesn't hurt his feelings,—but he would have made trouble for the live people. Go to sleep, my son."

"And so he is floating away?"

"Yes, he is floating away—they'll fish him out somewhere, and bury him."

"And won't the fishes eat him?"

"Fishes don't eat human flesh—crabs do. They are fond of it."

Fomá's terror melted away at the contact of his father's warm body, but the dreadful face with the grinning teeth still rocked on the water before his vision.

"And who was he?"

"God knows! Tell God about him: say—'Oh Lord, give rest to his soul.'"

"Oh Lord, give rest to his soul," repeated Fomá in a whisper.

"There now—go to sleep, have no fears. He is far away already. He is floating along—and see here; be careful not to go too close to the side of the boat—you might fall over—which God forbid!—into the water——"

"And did he fall overboard?"

"Of course—perhaps he was drunk—and that was the end of him! Perhaps he threw himself in. There are men who—a man takes and throws himself into the water and is drowned. Life is so arranged, my dear boy, that death sometimes is a festival for a man; and for all it is a blessing."

"Daddy. . . ."

"Go to sleep, go to sleep, my dear boy!"

III

On the first day of his school life, Fomá, stunned by the lively and healthy uproar of teasing pranks and turbulent childish games, picked out from among the children two who immediately appealed to him as more interesting than the rest. One sat in front of him. Fomá, as he darted furtive glances, perceived a broad back, a thick neck sprinkled with freckles, big ears, and a smoothly clipped nape, covered with bright red hair, which stood up in a brush.

When the teacher, a man with a bald head and a pendulous lower lip, called out: "Smólin Afrikán!" the red-headed boy rose deliberately to his feet, walked up to the teacher, looked him calmly in the eye, and having learned what was required of him, began carefully to write large, round figures with chalk on the blackboard.

"Good . . . that will do!" said the teacher. "Ezhóff Nikolái. . . continue!"

One of Fomá's neighbors in the division,—a restless little boy,—sprang from his seat and walked along past the benches, hitting everything, and keeping his head moving in all directions. On arriving at the blackboard, he seized the chalk, and elevating himself on the toes of his boots, he began to tap the board with the chalk, making it squeak and creating a litter, and jotting down small, illegible marks. "Be more quiet—" said the teacher, wrinkling up his yellow face with its weary eyes, as though in pain. But Ezhóff said, in a brisk, ringing voice:

"Now we know that the first pedlar made a profit of seventeen kopéks. . ."

"That will do! . . . Gordyéeff! Tell me, how would you set to work to find out how much profit the second pedlar made?"

Fomá, engrossed as he was in observing the conduct of the boys—who were so different each from the other—was surprised by the unexpectedness of the question, and made no reply.

"Don't you know? . . . Hm! . . Explain it to him, Smólin."

Smólin, after carefully wiping off his chalk-soiled fingers with a rag, laid aside the rag, and, without even casting a glance at Fomá, finished the problem, and began again to clean his hands, while Ezhóff, smiling and skipping as he went, betook himself to his place.

"You stupid!" he whispered, seating himself beside Fomá, and as he did so dealing him a punch in the side with his fist.—"Why can't you do it? How much profit was there altogether? Thirty kopéks . . and there were two pedlars . . one received seventeen kopéks,—well then, and how much did the other get?"

"I know," replied Fomá in a whisper, feeling much confused, and scrutinizing the face of Smólin, who was returning sedately to his place. The face did not please him. It was round, spotted with freckles, had blue eyes, and was overloaded with fat. But Ezhóff pinched his leg in a painful way, and inquired:

"Whose son are you—the Crazy Man's?"

"Yes."

"Indeed . . . If you like, I will always prompt you?"

"I do like."

"And what will you give me for doing it?"

Fomá reflected, and then asked:

"But do you know yourself?"

"I? I'm the head pupil—you'll see. . ."

"Hey, you there! Ezhóff—you are communicating again?" shouted the teacher, in a feebly-offended tone.

Ezhóff sprang to his feet, and said alertly:

"'Tisn't me, Iván Andréitch—it's Gordyéeff. . ."

"They were both whispering," said Smólin, imperturbably.

The teacher chided them both, dolefully contracting his face, and wagging his thick lip in an absurd way; but the reproof did not prevent Ezhóff from beginning to whisper again immediately:

"All right, Smólin! I'll give it to you for telling tales. . ."

"Why do you come down on the new fellow?" inquired Smólin softly, without turning his head.

"All right, all right," hissed Ezhóff.

Fomá held his peace, casting sidelong glances at his vivacious neighbor, who simultaneously pleased him, and inspired him with a desire to get as far away from him as possible. During recess, he learned from Ezhóff that Smólin was also rich, the son of a leather manufacturer, and that Ezhóff himself was the son of the janitor of the court of exchequer, and very poor. The latter fact was plainly apparent, both from the garb of the lively lad, made of gray fustian, adorned with patches on the knees and elbows, from his pale, hungry face, from his whole angular, bony little figure. This boy talked in a metallic alto voice, illustrating his speech with grimaces and gestures, and often made use of words whose meaning was known to himself alone.

"You and I will be chums," he announced to Fomá.

"Why did you tell on me to the teacher a while ago?" Gordyéeff reminded him, with a suspicious frown.

"There! What's that to you? You are a new fellow, and rich—the teacher doesn't punish the rich boys.—But I'm a poor hanger-on, he doesn't like me, because I'm impudent to him, and have never brought him a present. If I had neglected my studies, he would have turned me out long ago. Do you know—I'm going to the gymnasium after I'm through here . . I shall finish this second class, and then I shall go away . . A student is already preparing me for the second class there, also . . There I shall study hard—Oh, won't I just!—How many horses have you?"

"Three . . . Why are you going to study so hard?" asked Fomá.

"Because I am poor . . . Poor fellows have to study a lot, so that they, also, may become rich—become doctors, or officials, or officers in the army . . . I'm going to be a jingler too—a sword on my hip, spurs on my feet—clank, clank! And what are you going to be?"

"I—I don't know," said Fomá thoughtfully, staring at his comrade.

"'Tisn't necessary for you to be anything.—Are you fond of pigeons?"

"Yes."

"What a good-for-nothing you are! Oo—oo! Eh—eh!" And Ezhóff mimicked Fomá's deliberate speech. "How many pigeons have you?"

"I haven't any."

"The idea! He's rich, and he hasn't set up any pigeons . . I have three, one pouter, and a spotted female pigeon, and a tumbler. If my father were rich, I'd have a hundred pigeons, and I'd do nothing but fly them all day long. Smólin has pigeons also—fine ones! Fourteen—he gave me the tumbler. Only, he's greedy, all the same! . . .

All rich people are greedy . . . and are you greedy too?"

"I . . I don't know," said Fomá hesitatingly.

"You come to Smólin's, and we'll fly them, all three of us together."

"All right, if I'm allowed."

"Doesn't your father love you?"

"Yes, he loves me."

"Well, then he'll let you come . . . Only, don't tell that I'm going too—for they really won't let you come with me. You just say—let me go to Smólin's. Smólin!"

The fat boy approached, and Ezhóff greeted him, shaking his head reproachfully:

"Oh you red-headed tell-tale! It doesn't pay to be friends with you—you blockhead!"

"Why do you use bad language?" quietly inquired Smólin, looking Fomá over with staring eyes.

"I'm not using bad language, I'm telling the truth," explained Ezhóff, quivering all over with animation.—"See here! Even if you are a sour tempered fellow, it's all right. On Sunday, after church service, I'll come to you with him."

"Do," answered Smólin, with a nod.

"We will . . . The bell will ring soon, I'll run and sell my canary," pulling out of his trousers' pocket a paper packet, in which some live creature was struggling. And he vanished from the school-yard like quicksilver from the hand.

"What a fellow he is!" said Fomá, impressed by Ezhóff's liveliness, with an inquiring glance at Smólin.

"He's always like that . . He's very clever," explained the red-headed lad.

"And jolly," added Fomá.

"And jolly," assented Smólin. Then they fell silent, looking each other over.

"Will you come to my house with him?" asked the red-headed boy.

"Yes."

"Do . . It is nice at my house."

To this Fomá made no reply. Then Smólin asked him:

"Have you many comrades?"

"I have none at all."

"Neither did I have any until I went to school . . only my cousins. Now you'll have two chums, all at once."

"Yes," said Fomá.

"Are you glad?"

"Yes."

"It is cheerful, when you have a great many comrades. And you learn more easily—they prompt you."

"Do you study well?"

"Yes.—I do everything well," said Smólin composedly.

The bell jingled, as though it were frightened, and were scurrying off somewhere in haste. . .

As Fomá sat in school, he felt more at his ease, and began to compare his chums with the other boys. He speedily discovered that they were the very best in the school and the first to attract one's attention, as sharply as the two figures 5 and 7, which were not yet erased from the class-room blackboard. And Fomá was pleased that his comrades were better than all the other boys.

All three of them left the school-house together, but Ezhóff soon turned aside into a narrow alley, while Smólin accompanied Fomá all the way home, and, as he bade him farewell, said:

"Here, you, see—we can walk together also."

Fomá had a triumphant welcome home: his father gave

the lad a heavy silver spoon, with an elaborate monogram, and his aunt, a scarf of her own knitting. They were waiting for dinner for him, his favorite viands had been prepared, and as soon as he had changed his clothes, they seated themselves at the table and began to question him:

"Well, and how did you like the school?" said Ignát, gazing affectionately at the rosy, animated face of his son.

"I didn't mind it . . . It was fine!" replied Fomá.

"My darling!" sighed his aunt, with emotion.—"See here, don't you give way to your comrades. If they offend you in any way, go straight to the teacher, and tell him about them."

"Now listen to her!" laughed Ignát. "Don't you ever do that! Try to deal with every offender yourself, chastise him with your own fists, not through some one else's . . Are the children nice?"

"Two are," said Fomá, smiling, as he recalled Ezhóff. "One is so daring—he's a terror!"

"Who is he?"

"The janitor's son."

"Hm-m, daring, you say?"

"Terribly!"

"Well, God be with him! And the other?"

"The other is red-headed . . Smólin."

"Ah! Evidently, Mítry Iványitch's son. Hang on to him, he's good company . . Mítry is a clever man; if his son is like him, 'twould be a good thing. As for the other . . . Now, see here, Fomá: you invite them to be your guests here on Sunday. I'll buy presents, and you shall stand treat to them. We'll see what they are like."

"Smólin has invited me to his house on Sunday," announced Fomá, with an inquiring glance at his father.

"You don't say so!—Well, go! That's all right, go. Look

about and see what people are like in the world. You can't live alone, without friendship . . . Now, I have been friends with your god-father these twenty years, and have profited greatly by his good sense. So do you try to make friends with those who are better, cleverer than yourself. You'll get rubbed up, in the company of a good man . . . just as a copper kopék does against silver, and then you will pass for a twenty-kopék piece yourself."

And, laughing at his own comparison, Ignát added, seriously:

"I'm joking. Try not to be artificial, but genuine . . . and have some mind of your own, even if it isn't much. Well, and did they set you many lessons?"

"Yes!" sighed the boy, and a heavy sigh from his aunt resounded like an echo.

"Well . . . study. Don't be worse at learning than all the rest. I'll tell you what—in school—even if there were twenty-five classes—they teach nothing except how to read, write and cipher. You can learn divers nonsense in addition,—which God forbid! I'll flog you, if . . . If you smoke tobacco, I'll cut off your lips."

"Remember God, Fómushka," said his aunt.—"See to it, that you do not forget our Lord."

"That's true! Respect God and your parents. But what I want to say is, that the school-books are a small matter. You need them, as a carpenter needs an axe and a plane . . they are implements . . but they don't teach in school how the implements are to be used in one's business. Do you understand? Let's put it this way: an axe is placed in the hand of the carpenter, and with it he must square off the plank. The hands and the axe are not enough by themselves, in addition, he must know how to strike the wood, and not his foot. Reading and writing are placed

in your hand, and with them you must build your life. . So it appears, that books alone do not suffice for such an undertaking: you must also know how to make use of them . . . And that knowledge is precisely the thing which will be more clever than all the books, and in the books not a word is written concerning it. That is something which you must learn from life itself, Fomá. A book is a dead thing: grasp it as you will, tear it, break it—it will not shriek.—But life!—as soon as you walk unsteadily, or take up an irregular place in it,—it will yell at you with a thousand voices, and will smite you, to boot, and knock you off your feet."

Fomá, with his elbows propped on the table, listened in silence to his father, and under the influence of the powerful tones of his voice, pictured to himself, now a carpenter engaged in hewing a beam, now himself: cautiously, with arms outstretched before him, he seemed to be creeping over unstable ground toward something huge and living, and to be desirous of seizing hold of this terrible something.

"A man must take care of himself, for the sake of his affairs, and must know the road to his business thoroughly well . . A man, my dear fellow, is just like the pilot on a ship . . In youth and in flood-tide, go straight ahead! But you must recognize when the time has come to take to forced measures. The water has receded,—then look out; there is a shoal here, a snag there, in another place a rock; all these things must be calculated and avoided, if one is to reach the wharf safely."

"I'll reach it safely!" said the boy, gazing confidently and proudly at his father.

"Will you? You speak bravely!" laughed Ignát. And his aunt also laughed amiably.

Beginning with his trip on the Vólga with his father, Fomá became more and more daring, and talkative at home, with his father, his aunt, and the Mayákins. But on the street, or in any place which was new to him, or with strangers, he always glowered and gazed about him in a suspicious and distrustful manner, as though he were everywhere conscious of something which was hostile to him, concealed from him, and was spying upon him.

Sometimes, at night, he suddenly awoke, and listened to the silence around him, intently staring at the gloom with wide-open eyes. And there, before him, his father's tales were transformed into images and pictures. Imperceptibly to himself, he mixed them up with his aunt's fairy-tales, and created for himself a chaos of facts, wherein the vivid hues of fancy were capriciously interwoven with the stern colors of reality. The result was something vast, incomprehensible; the boy closed his eyes, and banished it all from him, and endeavored to bring to a halt this play of imagination which terrified him. But in vain did he try to sleep, for the room became more and more densely peopled with dark figures. Then he softly aroused his aunt:

"Aunty . . . say, Aunty."

"What is it? Christ be with you!"

"I'll come to you," whispered Fomá.

"Why? Go to sleep, my darling—go to sleep."

"I'm afraid," the boy confessed.

"Recite softly: 'Let God arise,' and your fear will disappear."

Fomá lay with closed eyes, and recited the prayer. The nocturnal silence appeared to him in the form of a limitless expanse of dark water, which was absolutely motionless,—it had spread everywhere and congealed, there was

upon it no ripple, neither shadow of movement, nor was there anything in it, although it was bottomlessly deep. It was very dreadful for anyone to look down from some height, in the gloom, upon this dead water . . But now the sound of the night-watchman's mallet rings out, and the child perceives that the surface of the water is quivering, and round, brilliant little balls are rolling over it, covering it with ripples . . The stroke of the bell in the belfry makes the whole expanse of water surge with a mighty swell, and for a long time it continues to rock from the blow. And the large, bright spot vacillates also, illumines it, spreads out from its centre to some place in the dark distance, then grows pale and is extinguished . . Again melancholy, dead calm reigns in this gloomy waste.

"Aunty," whispers Fomá, imploringly.

"Well, sonny?"

"I'm coming to you."

"Yes, come, come my own dear one."

Then he shifts into his aunt's bed, snuggles up to her, and entreats:

"Tell me a story."

"At night?" protests his aunt sleepily.

"Ple-eease!"

He does not have to implore her long. Yawning, in a voice that is hoarse with sleep, the old woman, with tight-shut eyes, says deliberately:

"Well then, sir, in a certain kingdom, in a certain realm, there lived and dwelt a man and his wife, and they were poor, very poor! They were such unfortunates that they had not even anything to eat. So they wandered about the world, and here and there people gave them a stale, discarded crust,—wherewith their hunger was appeased for the day. And lo! a child was born to them,—and it must

be baptized; but, because they were poor, and had nothing wherewith to regale the god-parents and guests, no one came to them to stand sponsor for the child! They did this, and did that—there was no one! Then they prayed to the Lord: 'Oh Lord! Oh Lord!'"

This terrible tale of God's god-child is familiar to Fomá; many a time has he heard it, and he depicts to himself, in advance, this god-child: there he is, riding on a white horse to his god-father and mother, he is riding in the darkness, through the desert, and he beholds therein all the intolerable torments to which sinners are condemned. And he hears their subdued groans, and their entreaties:

"O—o—o! Hey there, thou man! Inquire of the Lord if we have still long torment to undergo?"

Then it seems to the boy as though he, himself, is riding through the night on the white horse, and the groans and prayers are addressed to him. His heart contracts with some longing or other, which he does not understand; the chilly gloom oppresses his breast, and tears start to his eyes, which he has shut tightly, and is afraid to open.

He moves about restlessly in the bed.

"Go to sleep, my dear child, Christ be with thee!—" says the old woman, interrupting her tale of how these people were tormented for their sins.

But after such a night as this, Fomá arose in the morning, cheerful and alert, washed himself hurriedly, drank tea in haste, and ran off to school, with a supply of patties, both sweetened, and those made with milk and butter, which the ever-hungry little Ezhóff, who greedily fed upon the bounty of his wealthy comrade, was awaiting there.

"Have you fetched anything to devour?" he greeted Fomá, wagging about his sharp nose.—"Hand it over, for

I left home without having eaten anything. I overslept, plague take it—I studied until two o'clock this morning.—Have you done your sums?"

"No."

"Oh you gallinipper! Well, I'll show you about them presently."

Driving his small, sharp teeth into the patty, he began to purr like a kitten, beating time with his left foot, and, at the same time, he solved a problem, tossing brief phrases at Fomá:

"Do you see? In one hour, eight bucketfuls leaked out . . and how many hours did the leak last—six? Eh, what good things you do have to eat!—So, you must multiply six by eight. Do you like patties with green onions? I'm awfully fond of them! Well then, from the first faucet, in six hours, forty-eight bucketfuls leaked out, and in all, ninety were poured into the vat . . . do you understand the rest?"

Fomá liked Ezhóff better than he did Smólin, but he was on more friendly terms with Smólin. He was astonished at the capacity and the vivaciousness of the little peasant, he perceived that Ezhóff was cleverer and better than himself, he envied him and yet cherished a sense of injury against him on this account, and, at the same time, he pitied him, with the condescending pity of the well-fed for the hungry. It is possible, that precisely this pity prevented his giving the preference to the lively lad over the tiresome, red-headed Smólin. Ezhóff, who was fond of laughing at his well-fed comrades, often said to them:

"Eh, you little patty-boxes!"

His jeers enraged Fomá, and one day, cut to the heart, he said, scornfully and maliciously:

"You're a beggar—a pauper!"

Ezhóff's yellow face became covered with spots, and he slowly answered:

"All right—go ahead! I won't prompt you any more—and you'll go to the foot of the class as the dunce!"

And for three days they did not speak one with the other, to the mortification of the school-master, who, on those days was forced to place marks of one and two against the son of Ignát Matvyéevitch, so much respected by all.

Ezhóff knew everything: he narrated at school, that the procurator's chamber-maid had had a baby, and that on this account the procurator's wife had poured hot coffee on her husband; he could tell when and where the best perch-fishing was to be found; he knew how to make snares and cages for birds; he communicated the details as to why and how a soldier had hanged himself in the barracks, in the attic, from the parents of which pupil the teacher had received a gift that day, and just what the gift was.

Smólin's sphere of knowledge and interests was confined to the life of the merchant class, and the red-headed lad was particularly fond of making definite statements as to who were the richest members of that class, estimating and calculating their houses, ships and horses. All these things he knew incomparably well, and he discussed them with enthusiasm.

Toward Ezhóff he bore himself with the same condescending pity as did Fomá, but in a more friendly, equable manner than the latter. Every time that Gordyéeff quarrelled with Ezhóff, he strove to reconcile them, and, on one occasion, as they were on their way home from school, he said to Fomá:

"Why are you and Ezhóff continually abusing each other?"

"Why is he so conceited then?" retorted Fomá angrily.

"He's conceited because you are not a good scholar, and he is always helping you . . . He's clever! And as for his being poor—is he to blame for that? He can learn anything he has a mind to, and will be rich himself some day."

"He's a regular mosquito," said Fomá scornfully: "he sings, and sings, and then, all of a sudden, he bites."

But in the life of these small boys, there was a certain element which united them all, there were hours during which they lost consciousness of the differences of character and social position. On Sunday, they all three assembled at Smólin's and, climbing upon the roof of the wing, where a spacious dovecote had been constructed, they let out the pigeons.

The handsome, well-fed birds, fluttering their snow-white wings, flew from the dovecote, one after the other, and alighted in a row on the ridge-pole where, lighted up by the sun they cooed and strutted before the boys.

"Start them up!" entreated Ezhóff, quivering with impatience.

Smólin brandished in the air a long pole, with a tuft of shredded linden bast on the end, and whistled.

The frightened pigeons darted into the air, filling it with the rustling sound of wings. Then they would begin to soar smoothly upward, describing wide circles, as they rose into the deep blue sky, and floated, higher and higher, their plumage gleaming like silver and snow. Some of them seek to reach the dome of heaven with the easy flight of the falcon, spreading their wings broadly, and, to all appearances, not moving; the others play, turn somersaults in the air, fall downward like a snow-ball, and again dart aloft like an arrow. Now the whole flock seems to stand motion-

less in the vast expanse of the sky, and growing smaller and smaller, at last vanishes into it.

With their heads thrown back, the boys silently admire the birds, never taking their eyes from them,—weary eyes, beaming with quiet delight which is akin to envy of these winged creatures, soaring so freely from the earth into the pure, placid realm, filled with the radiance of the sun. The tiny group of specks, barely visible, dotted against the azure of the sky, draws the imagination of the children along with it, and Ezhóff expresses the feeling common to them all, when he says softly, and thoughtfully:

"We ought to be able to fly like that too, fellows!"

And Fomá, knowing that the soul of man frequently assumes the form of a dove as it flies heavenward, felt within his breast a surge of some desire both powerful and burning.

United in their rapture, silently and attentively watching for the return from the depths of heaven of their birds, the boys, nestling close to each other, have flown far away —as far as their pigeons from the earth—from the influence of life; at such moments they are simply children, they can neither envy nor get angry; estranged from everything, they are near to each other; without words, merely by the gleam in their eyes, they comprehend their sentiment, and feel as happy as the birds in the sky.

But now the pigeons have alighted upon the roof once more, weary with their flight, and are driven back into the dovecote.

"Say, fellows! Let's go after the apples!" suggests Ezhóff, the leader in all games and expeditions.

His cry expels from the childish souls the peaceful mood inspired by the pigeons, and with the cautious gait of bandits, and with robber-like sensitiveness to every sound, they

creep through the back gate into the neighboring garden. The fear of being caught is tempered down to equilibrium by the hope of being able to steal with impunity. Theft is toil, and dangerous toil, at that,—but everything earned by one's own toil is so sweet! . . And the greater the amount of effort required to obtain it, the sweeter it is! The small boys crawl cautiously over the garden fence, and bending double, creep to the apple-trees, casting keen and timorous glances from side to side. Their hearts quiver and stop beating at every rustle. With equal force they dread being caught, and being recognized if perceived; but if they are merely observed and shouted at, they will be content. At a shout, they fly apart and vanish, and then, coming together again, their eyes blazing with rapture and audacity, they laughingly describe to each other how they felt when they heard the shout and the hue and cry after them, and what happened to them when they ran through the garden as swiftly as though the ground were burning hot under their feet.

Fomá put more heart into such piratical adventures than into all their other enterprises and games,—and behaved himself on these incursions with a bravery which amazed and angered his companions. In other people's gardens he conducted himself in a deliberately reckless manner: he talked at the top of his voice; he broke off, with a crash, branches of the apple-trees; when he plucked a wormy apple, he hurled it at random, in the direction of the owner's dwelling. The danger of being caught on the scene of his crime, did not alarm but only excited him—his eyes darkened, he gritted his teeth, and his face became haughty and malign. Smólin said to him, scornfully mowing with his huge mouth as he did so:

"You make a great lot of braggadocio over it."

"I simply am not a coward!" retorted Fomá.

"I know you are not, but only fools make a fuss like that. You can do the deed just as well without any fuss."

Ezhóff condemned him from another point of view:

"If you want to shove yourself right into their hands, go to the devil! They'll catch you, and take you to your father—they won't do anything to you; but as for me, my good fellow, they'll lash me with a strap until all my poor little bones will be peeled bare."

"Coward!" reiterated Fomá, straight in his face.

And one fine day, Fomá was caught, by the hands of Staff-Captain Tchumakóff, a small, thin little old man. Creeping inaudibly up to the boy, who was engaged in thrusting the apples he had plucked into the bosom of his shirt, the old man dug his fingers into Fomá's shoulders, and shouted menacingly:

"I've got you, you robber! Aha!"

At that time, Fomá was about fifteen years of age, and he dexterously twisted himself free from the old man's clutch. He did not run away, however, but knitting his brows in a frown, and clenching his fists, he ejaculated threateningly:

"Just you try to touch me!"

"I won't touch you . . I'll take you to the police! Whose boy are you?"

Fomá was not prepared for this, and all his valor and malice instantly abandoned him. It seemed to him that a trip to the police-station was the sort of thing for which his father would never forgive him. He trembled, and answered in confusion:

"Gordyéeff's."

"I—Ignat Matvyéevitch's?"

"Yes."

It was the staff-captain's turn to be confused now. He drew himself up, puffed out his breast, and, for some reason or other, quacked impressively. Then he lowered his shoulders, and said to the boy, with an air of fatherly persuasion:

"Shame on you, sir! The heir of such a distinguished and respected personage! . . . You may go . . . But if you repeat your performance, then . . . hm! I shall be compelled to inform your papa . . . to whom, by the way, I beg you to present the assurance of my esteem."

Fomá watched the play of expression on the old man's countenance, and understood that the latter was afraid of his father. He stared at Tchumakóff with a furtive gaze, like a wolf-cub; and the latter, with ridiculously important mien, twisted his grand mustache, and shifted from one foot to the other before the lad, who did not take his departure, despite the permission which had been accorded to him.

"You may go," repeated the old man, and with his hand pointed out the road home.

"And how about taking me to the police-station?" inquired Fomá surlily, and then instantly was seized with alarm over the possible reply.

"That was——I was jesting," smiled the old man. "I wanted to give you a fright."

"You're afraid yourself—afraid of my father," said Fomá, and wheeling round, with his back toward the old man, he went off into the remote parts of the garden.

"I'm afraid? A-ah! Very good, sir!" shouted Tchumakóff after him, and from the sound of his voice Fomá knew that he had insulted the old man. He felt ashamed and sad; until the evening he roamed about alone, and when he reached home, he was greeted by a stern question from his father:

"Fómka![1] Have you been climbing into Tchumakóff's garden?"

"Yes," said the boy calmly, looking his father straight in the eye.

Ignát evidently was not expecting such an answer, and remained silent for a few seconds, stroking his beard.

"You fool! Why did you do it? Haven't you plenty of apples of your own?"

Fomá dropped his eyes, and made no reply, as he stood in front of his father.

"You see—you have put us to shame! I suppose that wretched little Ezhóff put you up to this? I'll give him a lesson when he comes here—or, rather, I'll put an end to your friendship . ."

"I did it of myself," said Fomá firmly.

"Worse and worse!" exclaimed Ignát. "Why did you do it?"

"Because [*tak*]"

"Quack!" mimicked his father. "Well, if you do that sort of thing, you must understand how to explain it to yourself and to other people. Come here!"

Fomá approached his father, who was seated in a chair, and stood between his knees, and Ignát placed his hands upon the boy's shoulders, and gazed into his eyes, with a laugh.

"Are you ashamed?"

"Yes," sighed Fomá.

"That's right, you blockhead! You are disgracing yourself and me."

Pressing his son's head to his breast, he smoothed the lad's hair, and again inquired:

"What need was there for you to steal other folks' apples?"

[1] Equivalent to "Tom."

"Well—I don't know," said Fomá, disconcerted.—"Perhaps because things are tiresome . . . You play, and play . . and it's always the same thing over and over . . and you get bored! But this is—dangerous. . ."

"It puts a grip on the heart?" asked his father, laughing.

"Yes."

"Hm! Perhaps it does, and so . . . But see here, Fomá,—drop it! If you don't, I'll deal severely with you."

"I'll never climb in anywhere again," said the boy confidently.

"'Tis a good thing that you assume the responsibility yourself. The Lord knows what sort of a fellow you'll turn out to be, and, in the meanwhile—never mind! 'Tis no small thing when a man is willing to pay for his own deeds, with his own skin . . Any other boy, in your position, would have thrown the blame on his comrades, but you say: 'I did it of my own accord.' That's the way to do, Fomá. If you commit the sin, do you answer for it. What—that Tchumakóff didn't—did he strike you," Ignát asked his son, hesitating for his phrase.

"I'd have hit him if he had!" remarked Fomá quietly.

"Hm . . ." grunted his father significantly.

"I told him that he was afraid of you—that's why he complained. Otherwise, he did not wish to come to you."

"Go on."

"By heavens! 'Express my esteem to your father,' he said . . ."

"He did?"

"Yes."

"Ah! . . the dog! Now, just see what people are like: he is robbed, and he sends greetings—: 'my regards to you!' Ha! ha! Let us assume that he had been robbed

of a kopék, say—and a kopék is as much to him as a ruble is to me. But the point doesn't lie in the fact that it is a kopék, but in the fact that it is mine, and let no one dare to touch it, if I don't fling it down myself . . . Eh! Well, deuce take them! Come now, tell me: where have you been, what have you seen?"

The boy sat down beside his father, and gave him a detailed account of his sensations during the day. Ignát listened, attentively examining his son's animated face, and the brows of the great man contracted.

"You're too highfalutin' for me, my boy! And you're still a child . . eh—he!"

"And in the ravine we scared up an owl," related the boy. "What fun it was! The owl flew out, and went whack! against a tree. It even squealed until it was really pitiful. But we scared him again, and he rose again, and it was the same thing all over—he flew, and flew, and then went bang into something . . so that his feathers were strewn all around! He hovered and hovered over the ravine, and he managed to hide himself somewhere, and we didn't try to find him any more, we felt so sorry for him—he was all bruised.—Is the owl completely blind by day, daddy?"

"Yes," said Ignát.—"Some men thrash about in life, like the owl.—They hunt and search for their proper place, and struggle, and struggle,—and the only result is that the feathers fly off them, and they accomplish nothing. They struggle until they are exhausted, and ill, and their plumage is all gone, and they flap their wings, and dive into any place that they happen to find, if only to rest from their labors. Eh, woe to such men—woe, my dear fellow!"

"And does it hurt them?" asked Fomá softly.

"Yes, just as it did that owl."

"And why are they like that?"

"Why?—It is hard to say. One man is so because his reason is beclouded by his pride—he desires much, but his power is small; another because of his stupidity,—and for all sorts of reasons. You can't understand . . ."

"Come, and drink tea," Anfísa summoned them.

For a long time she had been standing in the doorway, and, with her hands crossed on her stomach, she had been fondly admiring the huge form of her brother, bent, in friendly wise, over Fomá, and the thoughtful pose of the boy, who was nestling up against his father's shoulder.

Thus, day by day, Fomá's life unfolded,—a life which, as a whole, was not rich in emotions, but peaceful and quiet. Powerful impressions, which excited the boy's soul for an hour or a day, now and then stood out very distinctly against the general background of this monotonous existence, but were soon effaced from it. The boy's soul was still a placid lake—a lake shielded from the stormy gales of life, and everything which stirred the surface of the lake, or sank to its bottom, disturbed the sleeping water only for a brief space, or, slipping across its smooth expanse, spread out in wide circles, and vanished.

After spending five years in the district school, Fomá finished four classes, after a fashion, and graduated as a brave, black-haired youth, with a swarthy face, thick eyebrows and a dark down upon his upper lip. The expression of his large, dark eyes was meditative and ingenuous, and his lips were half-open, like those of a child; but when he encountered an opposition to his will, or when anything else irritated him—the pupils of his eyes dilated, his lips shut firmly, and his whole face assumed an obstinate and determined expression. His god-father, with a sceptical laugh, said of him:

"You'll be sweeter than honey for the women, Fomá . . . but, so far, there's no great amount of cleverness to be seen in you."

Ignát sighed at these words.

"You ought to put your son in circulation as soon as possible, crony."

"Just wait a bit."

"What's the good of waiting? Let him circulate about on the Vólga for two or three years, and then get him a wife . . There's my Liubóff, a fine girl . ."

Liubóff Mayákin, at that time, was studying in the fifth class of some boarding-school or other. Fomá often met her on the street, and on such occasions, she always nodded her golden-brown head in its stylish hat, condescendingly, at him. Fomá found her pleasing, but her rosy cheeks, merry brown eyes, and scarlet lips could not efface from Fomá's mind the offensive impression produced by her condescending nods. She was acquainted with some of the students in the gymnasium, and although among them was Ezhóff, his old chum, Fomá was not attracted to them, and felt himself ill at ease in their company. It seemed to him that they were all bragging before him of their learning, and were laughing at his ignorance. When they assembled at Liubóff's house, they all read some little books or other, and when he caught them at their reading, or engaged in noisy discussion, they all fell silent at the sight of him. All this repelled him from them. One day, when he was sitting with the Mayákins, Liúba invited him to take a stroll with her in the garden, and there, as she walked by his side, she asked him, with a little grimace:

"Why are you so unsociable? You never have a word to say about anything."

"What am I to talk about if I don't know anything?" said Fomá simply.

"Learn—read books."

"I don't want to."

"Look at those gymnasium boys—they know everything, and can talk about everything.—Ezhóff, for instance."

"I know Ezhóff—he's a chatter-box."

"You're envious of him—that's the simple fact. He's very clever. When he finishes at the gymnasium, he's going to Moscow, to study at the University."

"Well, that's all right," said Fomá, indifferently.

"But you'll be left in the lurch."

"Well, let me be."

"How fine!" exclaimed Liúba ironically.

"I shall find my place well enough without learning," said Fomá derisively.—"And I'll put every learned fellow to shame—let the starvelings study hard—but there's no need for me to do it."

"Fie, how stupid—malicious—hateful you are!" said the girl scornfully, and went away, leaving him alone in the garden. He stared after her, surly, offended, knit his brows, and, dropping his head, betook himself to the remotest part of the garden.

He had already begun to make acquaintance with the charms of solitude, and the sweet poison of revery. Often, on summer evenings, when everything on the earth is dyed in the fiery, dream-inspiring hues of the sunset, a troubled anguish about something, an anguish which he could not understand, penetrated his breast. As he sat in some dark nook of the garden, or lay upon his bed, he summoned up before him the images of fabulous princesses, —they presented themselves with the face of Liúba, and other young ladies of his acquaintance, floated noiselessly before him in the evening twilight, and gazed into his eyes

with enigmatical glances. Sometimes these visions aroused in him a flood of mighty energy, and, as it were, intoxicated him,—he rose to his feet, and throwing back his shoulders, with fully expanded lungs he drank in the balmy air; but sometimes these same visions inspired him with a feeling of melancholy—he was inclined to weep, but was ashamed of tears, and so controlled himself, and yet wept softly. Or, all of a sudden, his heart would quiver with the desire to say something grateful to God, to bow down before Him; the words of prayers flashed up in his memory, and, gazing heavenward, for a long time he would whisper them, one after the other, and his heart was relieved, as it poured itself out in the superabundance of his powers.

Patiently and cautiously, his father initiated him into the round of commercial affairs, took him with him to the Exchange, told him about the contracts and enterprises he had undertaken, about his fellow-merchants, described to him how they "had made their way," what property they now owned, what were their characters . . Fomá quickly mastered the business, bearing himself seriously and thoughtfully toward everything.

"Our burdock is going to blossom into a scarlet poppy!" laughed Mayákin, winking at Ignát.

And yet, even when Fomá had passed his nineteenth birthday, there was something childlike, ingenuous, about him, which distinguished him from other young men of his own age. They laughed at him, considering him stupid; he held himself aloof from them, offended by their attitude toward him. But this vagueness of character in Fomá inspired serious misgivings in his father and Mayákin, who never let him out of their sight.

"I can't understand him!" said Ignát in affliction.—"He doesn't go on sprees; apparently, he doesn't run

after the women, he's respectful to me and to you, he minds everything we say,—he's a handsome girl, and not a young man at all! And yet, he doesn't seem to be stupid?"

"There's no particular stupidity apparent," said Mayákin.

"Just look at it! It's as though he were waiting for something . . . There's a sort of curtain over his eyes . . His dead mother went through life gropingly, in the same fashion. Now, there's Afrikán Smólin, who's two years older—and just see what he is! I mean to say, that it's even difficult to understand which of them—father or son—is the head of the other? He wants to go off to some factory or other to learn the business . . . he rails: 'you've brought me up very badly, papa' . . There you have it! But my boy never makes any move on his own account . . . Oh Lord!"

"Now see here, this is what you must do with him," counselled Mayákin, "do you pitch him, head over heels into some urgent business or other! Really! now, I mean it! Gold is tried by fire. We shall find out what are his propensities, if we leave him free to act. Send him off to the Káma—alone."

"Do you think we can risk it?"

"Well, if he ruins the affair, you will lose something . . but, on the other hand, we shall find out what he has in him."

"Indeed then, I will send him off," said Ignát with decision.

Accordingly, in the spring, Ignát despatched his son with two barges of grain to the Káma river. The barges were in tow of Gordyéeff's steam-tug, "The Diligent," commanded by Fomá's old acquaintance, formerly sailor Efím

—now Efím Ilitch,[1] a square built man of thirty, a lynx-eyed, sensible, steady and extremely severe captain.

They travelled swiftly and merrily, because everyone was contented. Fomá was proud of the important commission entrusted to him for the first time. Efím rejoiced in the presence of the young master, who did not reprove him for every oversight, and decorate his remarks with violent curses; and the amiable mood of the two chief persons on board exerted a direct and beneficial influence on the whole crew. They set out from the place where they had taken aboard their grain in April, and early in May the steamer had already arrived at its destination, where, after anchoring the barges close to the shore, it took up a position alongside. Fomá was bound to sell the grain as quickly as possible, and when he had received the money for it, he was to go to Perm, where a load of iron which Ignát had contracted to convey to the Fair, was awaiting him.

The barges had halted opposite a large village, which sloped up to a pine forest, situated a couple of versts from the shore. On the day after their arrival, early in the morning, a large and noisy throng of men and women made their appearance, on foot and with horses; with shouts and songs they scattered over the decks, and—in a twinkling, the work was in full swing. The women descended into the holds, and when they had put the rye into sacks, the men, flinging the sacks on their shoulders, ran up the gangways to the shore, and from the shore carts heavily laden with the long expected grain wended their way slowly to the village.

The women sang songs, the men joked and abused each other merrily, the sailors, constituting themselves guardians

[1] The patronymic (not surname), added as a token of respect, and social standing.—*Translator.*

of order, shouted at the laborers; the planks of the gangway, bending under their tread, beat heavily on the water, while on shore horses neighed, carts squeaked, and so did the sand beneath their wheels.

No sooner was the sun up than the air was invigoratingly fresh and densely impregnated with the fragrance of the pines; the calm water of the river, reflecting the clear sky, gurgled pleasantly, as it beat against the bows of the vessels, and the anchor-chains. The loud, cheerful noise of labor, the youthful beauty of Nature in spring, gaily illuminated by the rays of the sun—all this was filled with healthy, kindly, coarse vigor which agreeably stimulated Fomá's soul, arousing in him new and troubled feelings and desires. He was sitting at table under the awning of the steamer, and drinking tea with Efím and the consignee of the grain, an official of the County Council, a sandy-haired, short-sighted gentleman in spectacles. Nervously twitching his shoulders, the consignee in a cracked voice was narrating how the peasants had been starving; but Fomá listened inattentively, as he gazed now at the work below, now at the other shore of the river—a lofty, yellow, sandy cliff, on whose brow grew pine trees. The spot was silent and solitary.

"I must go over there," said Fomá to himself. And just then his ear caught the uneasy, disagreeably sharp voice of the consignee, as though wafted from somewhere in the distance:

"You wouldn't believe it,—it finally became frightful! Here is a case in point: in Osá, a peasant went to a man of the better classes, and brought his daughter, a girl sixteen years of age.—'What do you want?'—'Why,' says he, 'here I've brought my daughter to you, Well-Born Sir.'—'What for?'—'Well—perhaps you'll take her,' says he,—'you're

an unmarried man.'—'What do you mean by that?'—'Why, I brought her,' says he, 'I brought her to town, intending to hire her out, as a servant—but no one will take her—so do you take her for your mistress!' Do you understand? He offered his daughter, do you see! his daughter—as a mistress! The devil knows what to think of that! Hey? Of course the gentleman was astounded, rushed at the peasant and cursed him. . But the peasant argued with him very reasonably: 'You're Well-born! What is she to me, in such times as these? She's entirely superfluous—for I have,' says he, 'three little boys—they will grow up to be laborers, they must be preserved. Give me ten rubles for the girl,' says he, 'and I can manage with the boys.'—What do you think of that, hey? 'Tis simply frightful, I tell you . . ."

"It's not go-o-od!" sighed Efím. "But hunger is not a kind relation, as the saying goes: The stomach has its laws, you see."

But this story aroused in Fomá a huge and titillating interest in the girl's fate, which was incomprehensible to him, and the young man hastily inquired of the consignee:

"And did the gentleman buy her?"

"Of course not!" exclaimed the consignee reprovingly.

"Well, and what did become of her then?"

"They found some kind people—they arranged matters."

"A-ah!" said Fomá slowly, and suddenly and firmly announced: "I would have given that peasant a sound thrashing! I'd have smashed his whole ugly phiz in for him!" and he displayed to the consignee his large, firmly clenched fist.

"Eh! Why?" exclaimed the consignee with painful loudness, jerking the spectacles from his eyes. "You don't understand the motive . . ."

"I do understand it," said Fomá, nodding his head obstinately.

"But what could he do? It did occur to him . . ."

"Is it possible to sell a human being?"

"Ah! It is a piece of savagery, I admit, I know.—"

"And a girl, into the bargain! I'd have given him his ten rubles!"

The consignee waved his hand despairingly, and made no reply. His gesture disconcerted Fomá; he rose from the table and stepping to the bulwark, began to stare at the deck of the barge, covered with a throng of people actively engaged in work. The noise intoxicated him, and that dim something which was fermenting in his spirit crystallized into a mighty longing to work also, to possess fabulous strength, vast shoulders and to load upon them a hundred sacks of rye at one time, in order that everyone might be enraged at him.

"Keep moving—step more lively!" he shouted loudly down at them. Several heads were raised towards him, several faces flashed across his vision, and among them, one—the face of a woman with black eyes,—smiled pleasantly and alluringly at him. At this smile something within his breast flashed up, and coursed in a hot flood through his veins. He tore himself away from the bulwark, and again approached the table, conscious that his cheeks were aflame.

"Listen to me," said the consignee. "Telegraph to your father—ask him to deduct some grain as leakage! See how dirty it is—and every pound is precious! He must understand that! But your papa——" he concluded, with a wry grimace.

"How much should be deducted?" asked Fomá, with jaunty scorn.

"Would one hundred poods suit you?[1] Two hundred? . ."

"That—I thank you!" cried the consignee, abashed and delighted. "If you have the right . ."

"I'm the master here," said Fomá firmly. "And you must not speak so of my father—and make faces——"

"Pardon me! I do not doubt your full power, I thank you sincerely—and your papa also, in the name of all these people—in the name of the nation."

Efím gazed apprehensively at his young master—and puffing out his lips, smacked them, while his master, with haughty countenance, listened to the swift speech of the consignee, who was pressing his hand warmly.

"Two hundred poods. That's—real Russian style, young man! Come, I'll announce your gift to the peasants immediately. You shall see how grateful they will be—how joyful . . ."

And he shouted below, in stentorian tones:

"My lads! The master makes you a present of two hundred poods!"

"Three hundred," interrupted Fomá.

"Three hundred poods—oh! thank you! Three hundred poods of grain, my lads!"

But the effect produced was weak. The peasants raised their heads upwards, dropped them again in silence, and went on with their work. Several voices said in a wavering and rather unwilling tone:

"Thanks. May the Lord requite you. We thank you most humbly."

But some one shouted merrily and very scornfully:

"What does that amount to! Now, if you had given us a little glass of liquor apiece—that would have been a kind-

[1] A pood is thirty-six pounds English weight.—*Translator.*

ness—a real one. But the grain goes to the County Council —not to us."

"Eh! they don't understand!" exclaimed the consignee, disconcerted. "Here, I'll go and explain it to them."

And he disappeared. But Fomá felt no interest in the attitude of the peasants towards his gift, he saw that the black eyes of the rosy-cheeked woman were fixed on him in a way that was very strange and pleasant to him. They thanked him, called him to her caressingly, and he saw nothing but them. The woman was clad in town fashion —in shoes and a cotton jacket, and her black locks were confined by a peculiar kerchief. She was tall and willowy, and as she sat on a pile of firewood, mending the grain-sacks, swiftly moving her arms which were bare to the elbow, she continued to smile at Fomá.

"Fomá Ignátitch!" he heard Efím's reproachful voice. "That was an awfully big bit of swagger! Fifty poods would have been plenty! But your brag was——. Look out—lest you and I catch it in the neck for that performance—"

"Get out!" replied Fomá curtly.

"What is it to me? I shall hold my tongue—but as you are still young, and I was told to look after you!—why —I shall catch it straight in the face for neglecting you."

"I'll tell my father—hold your tongue!" said Fomá.

"I—well—God be with you—you're the master here!"

"All right then."

"I'm speaking for your own good, Fomá Ignátitch—— because, as you are young—and simple."

"Mind your own business, I tell you, Efím!"

Efím sighed and made no reply. And Fomá stared at the woman and thought:

"If they were to bring such a woman for sale—to me . . ."

His heart beat more rapidly. He knew from conversations he had heard, all about the intimate relations between man and woman. He knew them under coarse and shameful names, and these names aroused in him a disagreeable, burning curiosity and shame, his imagination worked persistently, and yet he could not present all these things to himself in images which he could comprehend. And in his heart he believed that these relations were as simple and coarse as they had been represented to him. When he had been laughingly assured that they were so, and could not be otherwise, he had smiled stupidly and confusedly, but nevertheless he had thought that the relations with a woman were not necessary in that shameful form for all men, and that there certainly must be something purer, less coarse and offensive for a man.

Now, as he admired the black-eyed female laborer, Fomá was clearly conscious of precisely the coarser attraction to her, and he felt ashamed and alarmed at something or other. But Efím, as he stood beside him, said in a hortatory tone:

"There you are now staring at that woman—so I cannot hold my tongue. She is a stranger to you, but if she tips you the wink—you, in your youthfulness, and with your character, will bring things to such a pass that we shall have to make our way home afoot, along the shore—and you'll be lucky if you have even your breeches left."

"What do you want?" asked Fomá, scarlet with confusion.

"I don't want anything for myself. But I want you to listen to me. I can be a complete teacher for you in matters relating to women. You must act very simply with a peasant woman—give her a bottle of liquor, and something

to eat, and then set out a couple of bottles of beer,—and give her about twenty kopéks in cash. For that price she will show you her whole love in the best possible manner."

"You're always chattering nonsense," said Fomá quietly.

"I chatter nonsense, do I? See here—you just entrust this affair with her to me—will you? I'll bring about an acquaintance with her for you at once."

"Very well," said Fomá, feeling a difficulty in breathing, and as though something were clutching at his throat.

"Well then, I'll fetch her this evening——"

With an approving grin in Fomá's face, Efím marched off.

Until nightfall Fomá went about in a sort of fog, paying no heed to the respectful and searching glances with which the peasants watched him after the consignee had taught them their lesson. He felt a sort of dread, he felt guilty towards someone, and he answered all who addressed him in a submissively-pleasant way, as though excusing himself.

When evening came, a portion of the laborers went off, and assembling on the shore around a large, brilliant bonfire, began to cook their supper. Fragments of their talk floated to him on the evening stillness. The reflection of their fire fell upon the river in red and yellow spots, which quivered on the quiet water, and on the panes in the windows of the steamer's cabin, where Fomá sat. On the table before him stood several bottles of liquor and beer, and plates containing bread and relishes. He had curtained the windows, and had not lighted the lamps: the faint glow of the fire, penetrating the curtains, fell upon the table, the bottles and the wall, and flickered, growing now brighter, now fainter. All was quiet on the steamer and on the barges, except that from the shore the faint sounds of voices were wafted thither, and the river plashed almost inaudibly

against the sides of the steamer. It seemed to Fomá as though someone were hiding in the darkness around him, listening to him, watching him.—Now someone was traversing the gangway to the barges—walking hastily, with heavy tread,—the planks of the gangway beat angrily and resoundingly against the water.—Fomá hears the dull laughter of the captain, and his lowered voice. Efím is standing at the door of the cabin, and speaking softly but impressively, as though inculcating a lesson. All at once Fomá is seized with an impulse to shout:

"I don't want it!"

And he had already arisen from the divan—but at that moment the door of the cabin opened, the tall figure of a woman appeared on the threshold, and noiselessly closing the door behind her, she spoke, but not loudly:

"Good heavens, how dark it is! Is there any living soul here?"

"Yes," answered Fomá softly.

"Well then, good evening."

And the woman advanced cautiously.

"Here I am . . . I will light the lamp," said Fomá, in a broken voice, and throwing himself down upon the divan, he again shrank into a corner.

"Oh, it's all right as it is—one's eyes get used to it, and everything is visible in the darkness——"

"Sit down," said Fomá.

"I will."

She seated herself on the divan, a couple of paces from him. Fomá saw the gleam of her eyes, the smile on her full lips. It seemed to him as though she were not smiling in the same way as she had smiled that morning, but differently—somehow—pitifully, not cheerfully. This smile gave him courage, he breathed more freely at the sight of

those eyes, which suddenly drooped on encountering his eyes. But he did not know what he ought to talk about with this woman, and for a couple of minutes they both remained silent, with a silence that was awkward and oppressive.—She was the first to speak:

"You must find it very tiresome to be alone."

"Ye-es," replied Fomá.

"Does our neighborhood please you?" the woman asked in a low tone.

"Very well—there is a great deal of forest."

And again they became silent.

"The river is prettier than the Vólga, I think," ejaculated Fomá, with an effort.

"I have been on the Vólga."

"Where?"

"In the town of Simbírsk."

"Simbírsk," repeated Fomá, like an echo, feeling himself again in a condition which prevented his saying a word. But she must have understood with whom she had to deal,—and suddenly asked him, in a bold whisper:

"Well, master, what are you about? Aren't you going to treat me?"

"Well!" said Fomá, in confusion. "Really—what am I thinking of! Please come to the table."

He bustled about in the darkness, knocked against the table, picked up first one bottle, then another, and then set them down again, laughing in a guilty and confused way. But she came close to him, and stood beside him, gazing in his face, and at his trembling hands with a smile.

"Are you ashamed?" she whispered suddenly.

He felt her breath upon his neck, and answered her in the same soft way:

"Ye-es."

Then she laid her hands on his shoulders, and gently drew him to her bosom, saying in a reassuring whisper:

"Never mind,—don't feel ashamed—for you know it can't be dispensed with—my beauty, my lad—I'm sorry for you!"

And he felt like weeping at her whisper, his heart melted in sweet languor; pressing his head to her bosom, he clasped her closely in his arms, uttering unintelligible words which he himself did not understand.

"Go away!" said Fomá, in a dull voice, staring at the wall with widely opened eyes.

Kissing his cheek, she rose obediently and left the cabin, saying:

"Well, good-bye."

Fomá was intolerably ashamed in her presence, but no sooner had the door closed behind her than he sprang up and seated himself on the divan. Then he rose, tottering, to his feet, and at once was completely filled with the consciousness of a loss—the loss of something very precious, but whose presence in him he had not noticed until it was gone.—And then immediately there arose in him a new, virile sensation of pride in himself. He swallowed his shame, and in its place sprang up pity for the woman, who had gone off, half-dressed and alone, somewhere into the gloom of the chilly May night. He hastened from the cabin out upon the deck,—the night was starry but moonless, and the chill and darkness seized hold upon him. On the shore a golden-red heap of coals still sparkled. Fomá listened—an oppressive silence was spread abroad in the air, only the water gurgled as it beat against the anchor-chains, and nowhere was any sound of footsteps audible. He longed to call to the woman, but he did not know her name. Eagerly

inhaling the fresh air, with deep-drawn breaths, he stood for several minutes on the deck, and suddenly, from beyond the cabin, from the bow of the steamer, a sigh was wafted to him—a loud, heavy sigh, resembling a sob. He started, and cautiously betook himself in that direction, comprehending that she was there.

She was sitting on the deck, close to the bulwarks, and with her head resting on a pile of cordage, she was weeping. Fomá saw the white lumps, which were her bare shoulders, heaving, and heard her heavy sobs, and felt oppressed himself.

Bending over her, he timidly inquired:

"What is the matter with you?"

She shook her head, and made no reply.

"Have I hurt your feelings?"

"Go away—" said she.

"Yes—but,—" said Fomá confused and trembling, as he touched her head with his hand. "Don't be angry with me—you know it was you yourself——"

"I'm not angry," she answered in a loud whisper. "Why should I be angry with you? You are not a shameless or a violent man,—you are a pure soul! Ah, my transient darling! Sit down here beside me."

And taking Fomá's hand, she drew him down, like a child, upon her knees, pressed his head close to her breast, and bending over him, pressed her burning lips long and closely to his lips.

"What are you crying about?" asked Fomá, stroking her cheek with one hand, while with the other he embraced the woman's neck.

"About myself. Why did you send me away?" she asked reproachfully.

"I was ashamed," answered Fomá, with drooping head.

"My darling! Speak the whole truth—did I not please you?" she asked laughingly, but her large, burning tears still fell on Fomá's breast.

"What do you mean by that?!" exclaimed the young fellow, even with alarm, and hastily uttered words concerning her beauty, how agreeable she was, how sorry he was for her, how ashamed he felt before her. And she listened to him, and continued to kiss his cheeks, his neck, his head, and his bare breast.

He ceased speaking. Then she began sadly and softly, as though talking of a dead person:

"But I imagined something else. When you said 'Go away,' I rose and went. And your words were bitter, very bitter to me. This is what I was thinking: they used to fondle and pet me, without weariness, without rest; for a caressing smile of mine men used to do everything I wished. I recalled this, and fell to weeping! I regretted my youth . . . for I am already thirty years old . . . the last days for a woman! E-eh, Fomá Ignátitch!" she cried, raising her voice and hastening the rhythm of her chanting speech, to which sounds plashing of the water formed a beautiful accompaniment.

"Hearken to me—spare your youth! There is nothing in the world better than it. There is nothing more precious! With youth, as with gold, you can do whatever you wish. Live so that in your old age you will have something whereby to recall the years of your youth—I have recalled mine—and although I wept, yet my heart burned with one thing—the memory of how I used to live—and I grew young again, as though I had drunk of living water! My sweet child! I am amusing myself with you, if the fancy takes me, I'll amuse myself with all my might . . eh! I'll burn to the very ashes, if I once get ablaze!"

And pressing the young fellow close to her, she began eagerly to kiss his lips.

"Look o-o-o-out!" the watchman on the barge roared mournfully, breaking the word off short, and beginning to thump an iron plate with a small hammer. The trembling, penetrating sounds cut sharply through the triumphant stillness of the night.

In a few days, when the barges were unloaded, and the steamer was ready to set out for Perm, Efím, to his great discomfiture, saw a peasant cart drive down to the shore, and in it the blackeyed Pélagáya with her trunk and several bundles.

"Send a sailor to bring those things aboard," Fomá commanded him, nodding towards the shore. With a reproachful shake of the head Efím executed the command, and then, in a subdued voice, he inquired:

"So—she is going with us?"

"She is going with me," remarked Fomá curtly.

"Of course——oh Lord!"

"What are you sighing about?"

"Why—Fomá Ignátitch! You see, we're on our way to a big town . . . aren't there plenty of her sort to be had there?"

"Come now, hold your tongue!" said Fomá surlily.

"I will—only, this is irregular!"

"What?"

"This crazy prank will be reckoned up against all of us. Our vessel is proper, clean—and all of a sudden—here's a woman! And such a woman! Anyhow—the only thing you can call her is a female!" Fomá frowned suggestively, and said to the captain, uttering each word distinctly and with emphasis:

"Do you, Efím, take note, and tell all the crew to do the

same—that if I hear a disrespectful word about her, I'll crack you over the pate with a log of wood!"

"Who's afraid!" Efím was incredulous, and stared with curiosity in his master's face. But he immediately retreated a step from Fomá. Ignát's son disclosed his teeth in a snarl like a wolf, the pupils of his eyes dilated and he shouted:

"Just you try it! I dare you!"

Although Efím was frightened, he replied with dignity:

"You may be the master, Fomá Ignátitch, but I was told: 'Keep watch over him, Efím,' . . and I am the captain here."

"Captain?!" shrieked Fomá, trembling and turning pale. "And who am I?"

"Don't yell! For such a trifle as a woman."

Red spots started out on Fomá's pale face, he changed from one foot to the other, thrust his hands, with a convulsive movement, into the pockets of his pea-jacket, and said, in firm, even voice:

"You! Captain! Look here—if you say another word contrary to me—you may go to the devil! Begone! Go ashore! I'll finish the journey with the pilot! Do you understand? You're not going to hold command over me ——well?"

Efím was astounded. He stared at the master, and worked his eyes in an absurd way, unable to find an answer.

"Do you understand, I say?"

"I un-der-stand, I un-derstand!" drawled Efím. "But what's the use of making a row? For the sake of a——"

"Shut up!"

"Phew!"

Fomá's wildly blazing eyes, and his face distorted with wrath inspired the captain with the happy thought of get-

ting away from the master as promptly as possible, and turning briskly about, he went off.

"Phe-ew! He made the cold chills run down my back! Evidently, he's a chip of the old block," he muttered sardonically to himself, as he strode along the deck. He was angry with Fomá, and considered that he had been wrongfully insulted, but at the same time, he felt over him the firm hand of a true master. He had been for so many years subject to authority that he was pleased with the power over him that had been revealed, and when he entered the cabin of the old pilot, it was with a shade of satisfaction in his voice that he narrated to the latter the scene which had taken place between him and the master.

"You have seen him?" he concluded his story. "He's just like a puppy of a good breed,—he makes a good dog at his first hunt. But in appearance he is only so-so—a rather paltry young man of muddy mind. Well, never mind, let him sow his wild oats—it will do no harm, you know—with his character. Yes, how he did yell at me! 'Twas like a trumpet, I tell you. And he instantly asserted his mastership—as if he'd been used to power and strictness ever since his bread-and-milk days."

Efím spoke truly: in the course of the last few days Fomá had undergone a sharp change. Passion, flaming up in him, had made him master of the body and soul of a woman, he eagerly quaffed the fiery sweetness of this power, and it burned out of him all the awkwardness which gave to him the appearance of a surly and rather dull young fellow, and in annihilating this, it had filled the young man's heart with the consciousness of his virile personality. Love for a woman is always fruitful for a man, be the woman what she may, even if she gives only suffering,—and in suffering there is always much that is of value. Love,

while it is a violent poison for him who is sick in soul, is for the healthy man as the fire is to the iron which wishes to become steel.

Fomá's infatuation for a woman of thirty, who was celebrating in the arms of a youth the funeral of her youth, did not distract him from business; he did not lose his head either in embraces or in work, but threw himself wholly into both. The woman, like good wine, excited in him, with equal force, a thirst for labor and for love, and she herself grew young again, rejuvenated by the kisses of youth.

In Perm Fomá found awaiting him a letter from his godfather, who informed him that Ignát had taken to drink with longing for his son; and that at his age it was injurious to drink so. The letter wound up with the advice that he should make haste with his business and return home as speedily as possible. Fomá was disturbed by this advice, and it embittered the bright festival of his heart; but this shadow was soon dissipated by business cares and Pélagáya's caresses. His life flowed on with the swiftness of the river's current, and every day brought to him new sensations, which gave birth to new thoughts. Pélagáya treated him with all the passion of a mistress, with that force of feeling which women of her age inject into their amours, when they are quaffing the last drops from the cup of life. But at times another feeling was aroused in her, a feeling no less strong, and one which bound Fomá to her still more effectually—a feeling similar to the attempt of a mother to guard her beloved son from errors, to teach him the art of living. Often, at night, as they sat on deck, with their arms about each other, she said fondly but sadly to him:

"Heed me as you would an elder sister. I have lived—I know what people are,—I have seen a great deal in my

life! Choose your friends carefully, for there are people who are as infectious as a disease . . At first you will not be able to discern what sort of a person the man is; he seems like all other men, and all of a sudden, before you notice it yourself, you will begin to imitate him in your own life. All at once, his ways have stuck to you. For instance, I lost everything through a friend . . . I had a husband—two children—we lived well; my husband was clerk of the County Council."

She paused, stared for a long time over the side of the vessel, at the water disturbed by the vessel, and then, with a sigh, she began again:

"May the All-holy Birthgiver of God preserve you from women of my class! Be cautious. You are soft, your heart is not really tempered and hardened yet. But women are fond of men like you—strong, handsome, rich; and above all be on your guard against the quiet women—that sort of woman clings to a man like a leech—and drinks and sucks, and sucks, and all the while is so amiable, so tender. She will suck the very juice out of you, but will spare herself—and will merely break your heart for nothing. Deal rather with those who are bold, like me. Such women are disinterested."

She really was disinterested. At Perm Fomá bought her various new articles of clothing, and trifles. She was delighted with them, but after examining them she said, anxiously:

"Don't squander your money so: look out or your father will be angry. I love you just the same without these things."

Before that she had told him that she would go with him only as far as Kazán, where her married sister lived. Fomá did not believe that she would leave him, and when

—on the night before they reached Kazán—she repeated her words, his brow darkened and he began to entreat her not to abandon him.

"Don't mourn before the time comes," said she. "We have still a whole night before us. When we part you may grieve—if it pains you."

But he urged her with all the greater warmth not to leave him, and at last—as was to have been expected—he announced that he wished to marry her.

"There, there—now!" and she broke out laughing. "Am I to marry you when I have a husband living? You are my dear little funny fellow! Did you want to get married? But do men marry such as I am? Marry when you have simmered down. You will have many, many, mistresses; when you have eaten your fill of sweets then you will crave for plain rye bread—that's the time to marry! I have observed that a healthy man, for his own peace of mind, should not marry young—his wife is not enough for him, and he will go with other women. And for your own happiness you must take a wife when you see that she will be enough alone for you."

But the more she talked, the firmer and more persistent did Fomá become in his desire not to part with her.

"Now listen to what I am about to tell you—" said the woman calmly. "A pine-knot is burning in your hand, but you have light enough without it, so do you quench it at once in the water, and then there will be no stench from it, and it will not burn your hands."

"I don't understand your words."

"You must: you have done me no harm, and I wish no harm to you. So I shall go away."

It is difficult to say how this dispute would have ended, if fate had not taken a hand in it. At Kazán Fomá received

a telegram from Mayákin, who curtly ordered his godson: "Come at once, on a passenger-steamer." Fomá's heart contracted painfully, and a few hours later, with set teeth, pale and morose, he stood on the gallery of a steamer which was putting off from the wharf, and with hands clenching the rail, motionless and not even winking he was gazing into the face of his beloved, which was receding from him into the distance along with the wharf and the shore. Pélagáya waved her handkerchief to him, and kept on smiling, but he knew that she was weeping great, painful tears. The whole bosom of Fomá's shirt was wet with her tears, and his heart was cold and heavy with them, filled as it already was with sad apprehension. The woman's figure grew smaller and smaller, as though melting away, and Fomá gazed at it, never taking his eyes from it, and felt that in addition to his terror about his father, and his grief for the woman, some new, powerful and caustic sensation was coming into existence. He could not put a name to it, but it seemed to him very much like offense at someone.

The throng of people on the wharf became merged into a dense, dark, dead spot, without faces, without forms, without motion. Fomá left the rail, and began to pace the deck in surly mood.

The passengers were conversing in loud tones, sat down to drink tea, the waiters hurried to and fro on the gallery setting the little tables; somewhere down below, on the stern, a child was laughing, an accordion was whining, the cook was clashing his knives noisily and the dishes were rattling loudly. The huge steamer forged its way swiftly up stream, cutting through the waves, making them foam, and quivering with the exertion. Fomá gazed at the broad strip of broken, churning, angry waves in the wake of the steamer, and felt within him a savage desire to break, to rend some-

thing—to breast the current with his own bosom, and shatter its pressure to atoms against his chest and shoulders.

"Fate!" said someone near him, in a hoarse and weary voice.

The word was familiar to him, it had often formed his aunt Anfísa's reply to Fomá's questions, and that short word suggested to him an idea of force resembling the force of God Himself. He glanced at the speakers; one of them was a gray-haired little old man, with a kindly face; the other was younger, with large, weary eyes, and a black, wedge-shaped beard. His large, gristly nose and yellow, sunken cheeks reminded Fomá of his god-father.

"Fate!" the old man repeated with conviction to his companion's exclamation, and laughed:

"It is over our life as a fisherman is over the river; it flings to our vanity a hook with a bait, but man instantly snaps up the bait, with greedy mouth,—and then Fate draws in her catch—and the man beats against the earth, and his heart is broken, you see . . . and that is Fate, my good sir!"

Fomá shut his eyes, as though a ray of sunlight had flashed into them, and shaking his head he said aloud:

"That's so! Yes—that's so!"

The men who had been talking stared intently at him: the old man with a fine, intelligent smile, the big-eyed man in hostile wise, askance. This confused Fomá, and flushing scarlet he walked away, meditating about Fate, and wondering why it should have shown him favor by giving him the woman only to wrest the gift from his hand in so simple and so offensive a manner? And he comprehended that the dim, caustic feeling which he bore within him,—was an affront to Fate for her trifling with him. He was too much spoiled by life to bear himself more simply towards the

first drop of gall in the beaker which he had just begun to quaff, and the whole time of his journey he spent without sleep, thinking about the old man's words and nursing his sense of injury. Yet it excited in him, neither depression nor grief, but only a wrathful and revengeful feeling.

Fomá was met at the wharf by his god-father and in answer to his impetuous, anxious questions, the old man announced to his godson, his greenish eyes sparkling with excitement, as he seated himself in the open carriage beside his godson:

"Your father has gone out of his mind."

"Is he drinking?"

"Worse—he has lost his head completely."

"You don't say so? Oh heavens! Speak—"

"You understand: a certain little lady has got hold of him."

"What of that?" exclaimed Fomá, recalling his Pélagáya, and for some reason he felt a sensation of joy in his heart.

"She is sticking fast to him—sucking him dry."

"Is she the quiet sort?"

"She? Quiet as a conflagration. She has enticed seventy-five thousand rubles out of his pocket, like so much down."

"O-oh! Who is she?"

"Sónka Medýnsky, the wife of the architect."

"Heavens! Can it be that she . . Is it possible that my father—can have made her his mistress?" asked Fomá softly, in amazement.

His god-father started back, and with eyes protruding in an absurd way, said with conviction:

"Well, my good fellow, you're cracked also! By heavens, you are out of your mind! Gather your wits together! To

set up a mistress at the age of sixty-three—and at such a price, to boot. What ails you? Well, I'll tell Ignát about this."

And Mayákin broke into a quavering, hasty laugh, which made his goat-like beard shake about in an ugly way. It was a long time before Fomá could get him to explain; contrary to his habit, the old man was uneasy, excited, his speech, always suave, was incoherent, he told his story intermingled with oaths and spitting, and Fomá had great difficulty in making out what the trouble was. It appeared that Sófya Pávlovna Medýnsky, the wife of a wealthy architect, known to the whole town for her unwearied efforts in the promotion of various philanthropic enterprises,—had persuaded Ignát to contribute seventy-five thousand rubles to build for the town a night lodging-house and a library and reading-room for the lower classes. Ignát had given the money, and the newspapers had already lauded him for his generosity. Fomá had often seen this woman in the street: she was small of stature, he knew that she was considered one of the greatest beauties in town, and that ugly rumors were current as to her character.

"Is that all?" he exclaimed, when his god-father had finished his tale. "But I thought—God knows what."

"You? You thought?" cried Mayákin with sudden anger. "You didn't think anything—you milksop!"

"Why do you call names?" asked Fomá in surprise.

"Tell me—is seventy-five thousand rubles a big sum of money in your opinion?"

"Yes," said Fomá, after thinking it over.

"Aha-a!?"

"But my father has lots of money—why do you—"

Yákoff Tarásovitch lost control of himself completely:

he stared scornfully straight in the face of the young man, and asked in a weak sort of voice:

"Is it you who is talking?"

"Yes—who else could it be?"

"You lie! 'Tis your youthful stupidity that's speaking, that it is! But my aged stupidity—put to the proof a million times by life—says to you: 'You're still a puppy, 'tis too early for you to be barking in a bass voice.'"

Fomá had often been provoked, in his younger days, by the over-figurative language of his god-father,—but now he felt himself deeply insulted by the old man, and he said to him, soberly but firmly:

"You will do well not to let your tongue loose at random, —for I'm no longer a boy."

"Well, and what are you!" cried Mayákin jeeringly, elevating his eyebrows and casting a sidelong glance at him.

Then Fomá exploded. He looked the old man straight in the eye, and said, distinctly and impressively:

"I tell you again, that I won't listen any longer to your wanton curses . . . Stop it!"

"Hm-m—yes . . . exactly so! Pardon me."

Yákoff Tarásovitch here closed his eyes, bit his lips, and turning away from his godson, remained silent for a moment. The carriage turned into a narrow street, and catching sight of the roof of his home in the distance, Fomá involuntarily bent his whole body forward towards it. At the same moment, his god-father, smiling craftily and affectionately, asked him:

"Fómka! Tell me—on whom have you been cutting your teeth?"

"Have they really become sharp?" asked Fomá delighted by this appeal on the part of his god-father.

"They'll do, all right! 'Tis well, my dear fellow, 'tis

very well! Your father and I were afraid that you'd turn out an effeminate fool. Well, and have you learned to drink liquor?"

"Yes."

"You've been prompt about it! Do you drink much?"

"Why should I?"

"And you like it?"

"Not very much."

"Well—that's all right; it's not bad. Only, you're pretty frank——you're ready to confess all your sins to any priest that comes along—just reflect on that point, my dear fellow, it is not always the thing to do; there are times when by holding your tongue you will please people better and avoid sin. Well—yes. A man's tongue is rarely discreet . . Well, here we are. Look out—your father doesn't know that you have arrived; and I wonder if he has come home yet?"

He was at home; his big, rather hoarse laughter floated out upon the street through the open windows of the room. The noise the carriage made as it drove up caused Ignát to look out of the window, and at the sight of his son he shouted joyously:

"A-ah! He's come!"

A moment later, pressing Fomá to his breast with one hand, he laid the palm of the other against his son's brow, pushed back his head, gazed into his face with beaming eyes, and said with an air of satisfaction:

"How sunburnt he is—how healthy—what a fine fellow! Madam! Haven't I a fine son?"

"He's not bad," said a silvery, caressing voice.

Fomá glanced past his father's shoulder and beheld: in the corner of honor, with her elbows resting on the table, sat a tiny woman, with luxuriant blond hair, and from her

pale face stood out clearly her dark eyes, delicate brows, and full, crimson lips. Behind her chair stood a large tropical plant, and its huge, mottled leaves hung in the air above her little golden head.

"Good health to you, Sófya Pávlovna," said Mayákin pleasantly, as he approached her with outstretched hand. "Are you still collecting contributions from us poor people?"

Fomá bowed to her in silence, and did not hear her reply to Mayákin, nor what his father was saying to him. The lady was gazing intently at him, and smiling at him courteously and brightly. Her childish figure, enveloped in some sort of dark material, was almost indistinguishable against the dark crimson covering of the arm-chair, so that her wavy golden hair and pale face seemed to shine forth from the dark background. As she sat there in the corner, under the green leaves, she was like a flower, and like a holy picture.

"See, Sófya Pávlovna, how he is looking at you—like an eagle, isn't he?" said Ignát.

She puckered up her eyes, a faint flush rose to her cheek, and she laughed—and the sound was like that of a tiny silver bell. Then she rose, saying:

"I will not intrude upon you: *au revoir.*"

As she went noiselessly past Fomá, he caught a breath of perfumes, and he was surprised to find that her eyes were dark blue, and her eyebrows almost black.

"The pike has swum away," said Mayákin softly, gazing after her malignantly.

"Come, tell us about your travels. Have you squandered a great deal of money?" said Ignát in his deep, humming voice, as he pushed his son into the chair which Madam Medýnsky had just quitted. Fomá cast a sidelong glance at it, and seated himself in another.

"She's a pretty little woman, isn't she?" asked Mayákin with a laugh, probing Fomá with his crafty eyes.—"You'll gape at her—and she'll devour your whole insides . . ."

For some reason or other Fomá shuddered, and without replying to him, began to talk to his father in a business-like tone about his journey. But Ignát interrupted him:

"Wait, I'll order some brandy."

"But you're drinking continually, I hear," said Fomá disapprovingly.

Ignát looked at him with amazement and curiosity, and asked:

"Does one speak to his father like that, hey?"

Fomá dropped his head in confusion.

"Never mind!" said Ignát goodnaturedly, and shouted for some brandy. Mayákin half-closed his eyes, looked hard at the Gordyéeffs, sighed, took leave and went away, after inviting them to come to his house in the evening to drink tea with raspberries.

"Where's Aunty Anfísa?" asked Fomá, feeling rather awkward, now that he was alone with his father.

"She has gone off to the convent . . Come, now, talk to me while I drink."

In a few minutes Fomá had told his father all about business matters, and wound up his account with a frank confession.

"I have spent a great deal of money on myself."

"How much?"

"Six hundred rubles."

"In a month and a half! That's a good deal.—I see that you will cost me pretty dear as a clerk. How did you squander it?"

"I made a present of three hundred poods of grain."

"To whom? How?"

Fomá explained.

"Hm! well—never mind—that's all right!" said his father approvingly. "It's a plain case—for your father's honor—for the honor of the firm. And there's no loss—because,—glory is a good thing—and that matter, my dear fellow, is the best advertisement for trade. Well—and what else?"

"Well—I—just spent it, one way and another."

"Speak plainly—I'm not asking about the money;—I want to know about your own life," persisted Ignát, inspecting his son intently and severely.

"I ate—and drank—" said Fomá, surlily, without betraying himself, and bowing his head in confusion.

"You drank? Vódka?"

"Yes—among the rest."

"Ah! Isn't it rather early to begin that?"

"Ask Efím if I got drunk."

"Why should I question Efím? You must tell me everything yourself. So you drink, it appears? I don't like it."

"I can get along without drinking."

"No you can't! Will you have some brandy?"

Fomá looked at his father and grinned broadly. And his father replied by a good-natured smile.

"Heigh-ho! the devil! Drink—but look out—understand what you are about. How do you pass your time? A drunkard will wake up, a fool never—let us comprehend this much, at least, for our own consolation. . . Well, and did you carry on with the girls? Speak out! Do you suppose I'm going to thrash you?"

"Yes, I did. There was one on the steamer. I took her from Perm to Kazán."

"Well,"—Ignát sighed heavily, and said, with a frown: "You've defiled yourself early."

"I'm twenty years old. And you said yourself, that in your day, boys of fifteen got married," retorted his son, taken aback.

"Exactly—they got married. Well, all right, let's drop the subject. So you cut up with a girl; what of that? Woman is like the small-pox; you can't live without having her. And it doesn't suit me to play the hypocrite,—I began to make love to the women even earlier than you have done. Only, be on your guard with them."

Ignát fell into thought, and remained silent for a long time, as he sat motionless, with bowed head.

"See here, Fomá," he began again, harshly and firmly, "I shall die before long. I'm old. I feel a weight on my breast; it is hard for me to breathe. I shall die. Then all the business will devolve upon you. Your god-father will help you at the start; heed his advice! You have made a good beginning, you have handled everything in the proper manner, you have got a good grip on the reins, and, although your spree has cost a lot of money, 'tis evident that you have not lost your common-sense. God grant that it may be so in the future also. You must know this: business is a live and powerful wild beast; it must be managed wisely; you must keep a tight rein on it or it will get the better of you. Try to stand above your business—place yourself in such a position that it will all be under your feet, in sight; let every little rivet in it be visible to you."

Fomá gazed at his father's broad chest, listened to his deep voice, and thought to himself:

"Well, you'll not die in a hurry!"

This thought was pleasing to him, and aroused in him a kindly, fervent sentiment toward his father.

"Stick to your god-father—he has brains in his noddle

—enough for the whole town—only he lacks courage; if it were not for that, he would rise high. Yes, as I tell you, I have not long to live. In fact, it is time for me to prepare for death. I'd like to give up everything and make my devotions, and arrange things so that people would remember me kindly."

"They will remember you!" said Fomá confidently.

"There ought to be something to make them."

"And how about the night lodging-house?"

Ignát glanced at his son and burst out laughing.

"So Yákoff has already told you; he found time for that, the old skinflint! He abused me, I suppose?"

"Yes, he did a little," admitted Fomá, smiling.

"Well, of course! Don't I know him?"

"He spoke about it exactly as though it were his money."

Ignát threw himself back in his chair and burst into a louder roar of laughter than before.

"Oh, the old raven! he did, did he? You're right about that. In his eyes, my money and his own are one and the same thing; so he's trembling. He has an object, the bald-headed rogue! Come, now, tell me what it is."

Fomá reflected, and said:

"I don't know."

"Eh! You're stupid. He wants to unite the money."

"How?"

"Well then, guess!"

Fomá looked at his father—and guessed. His face clouded over, he rose from his chair, saying, decisively:

"No, I will not; I will not marry her!"

"Oh! what's the meaning of this? She's a healthy lass, not stupid, her father's only child."

"And how about Tarás, the one who disappeared? And I—will not, on any terms!"

"The son who disappeared has—disappeared, and that's the end of it; it doesn't seem worth while to discuss him. There is a will, my dear fellow, which says: 'All my property, real and personal, I bequeath to my daughter, Liubóff.' And as for her being your god-sister—we'll arrange that." [1]

"That makes no difference," said Fomá, firmly; "I will not marry her!"

"Well, it's early yet to talk about that. But why isn't she to your liking?"

"I don't like that sort."

"Re—eally! Pray tell me, sir, what sort are most to your taste."

"The very simple ones. She's there with the gymnasium girls and her little books—she has become learned. She will laugh at me," said Fomá, with agitation.

"That's true enough. She's forward, beyond all bounds, but that's of no consequence—all sorts of iron-rust can be polished off if you apply elbow-grease. That's something that time will mend. But your god-father is a clever old fellow. His existence has been tranquil, sedentary, and as he sat still in one place, he has thought about everything . . he's worth heeding, my dear boy; he sees through and through every affair in life. He's one of our 'ristocrats, from the days of Mátushka Yekaterína—ha, ha! And, as his race has died out in Tarás, he has decided to put you in the place of Tarás. Do you realize that?"

"No. I—I'll choose my own place for myself," said Fomá obstinately.

[1] According to the canons of the Holy Orthodox Catholic Church of the East this "relationship" is within the prohibited degrees.—*Translator.*

"You're stupid, still!" laughed his father, in reply to his words.

Their conversation was interrupted by the approach of Aunt Anfísa.

"Fómushka! you have come!" she cried, somewhere outside the door. Fomá rose, and went to meet her, with an affectionate smile.

Again his life flowed on slowly, quietly, and monotonously. There was more 'Change, and instruction from his father. While preserving toward his son a tone of amiable raillery, Ignát began, on the whole, to treat him more sternly. He called the young man's attention to every petty trifle, and more and more frequently reminded him that he had brought him up in freedom, had never put any restraint upon him, and had never thrashed him.

"Other fathers beat fellows like you with logs of wood—but I have never laid a finger on you."

"Evidently, there was no cause for doing it," retorted Fomá calmly, one day.

Ignát flew into a rage against his son for these words, and the tone with which they were uttered.

"Talk away!" he bellowed.—"You've got uppish, under my tender handling. You have an answer ready for everything. See here—though my hand has been soft, it can still squeeze so that the tears will burst out of your heels. You've run up rapidly, like a toad-stool; no sooner have you thrust your head above ground than you stink."

"Why are you angry with me?" Fomá asked, surprised and hurt, when his father was in an amiable frame of mind.

"And you can't endure to have your father grumble at you—you pick a quarrel on the spot."

"But it is insulting to me. I have not become any worse—and I see how other fellows of my age live."

"Your head won't fall off if I do scold you now and then. And I scold because I see that there's something in you which you don't get from me . . what it is, I don't know; but I see that it is there, and is injurious to you."

These words from his father caused Fomá to ponder deeply. He himself felt within himself something peculiar, which thrust him apart from men of his own age, but he, also, was unable to comprehend what it was. And he maintained a suspicious watch on himself.

It pleased him to be on 'Change, in the tumult and talk of solid men, who had conducted thousands of affairs; he was flattered by the respect with which the less wealthy traders saluted and conversed with him, Fomá Gordyéeff, the son of the millionaire.

He felt proud and happy if, now and then, he succeeded in managing some detail in his father's business, on his own responsibility, and earning a smile of approval from his father for his successful management. He had a good deal of ambitious aspiration to seem a full-grown and active business man, but he lived a lonesome life, as before —previous to his trip to Perm—and did not yet feel any yearning to have friends, although every day he encountered many sons of merchants, of his own age. Many a time did they invite him to carouse, but he roughly and scornfully refused the invitations, and even sneered:

"I'm afraid. Your fathers will find out about these carouses, and they will thrash you, probably, and I shall get it in the neck from them."

What displeased him in them was, that they caroused and indulged their vices on the sly from their fathers, with money stolen from their fathers' funds, or borrowed

on notes of hand for long periods, at huge interest. They, on their part, did not like him, because of his reserve and squeamishness, in which they detected great pride that was offensive to them. He felt embarrassed at conversing with the older men, fearing that he might appear to them stupid and ignorant of business.

He often called to mind Pelagáya, and, at first, he felt sad when her image flashed up in his imagination. But time passed, and somewhat obliterated the brilliant hues of this woman, and, imperceptibly to himself, her place in his dreams was usurped by little, angel-faced Madame Medýnsky. Almost every Sunday she ran in to see Ignát, with various requests, with one general object in view—to hasten the construction of the night lodging-house. In her presence Fomá felt himself awkward, huge, heavy; this displeased him, and he flushed a deep scarlet under the affectionate gaze of Sófya Pávlovna's big eyes. He noticed that every time she glanced at him her eyes grew dark, and her upper lip quivered, and was raised almost imperceptibly, revealing her tiny white teeth. This always alarmed him. His father, observing his glances at Madame Medýnsky, said to him:

"Don't you stare too much at that little phiz. She's like birch-wood coals; outwardly they are just such modest, smooth, dark affairs,—they seem to be perfectly cold,—but if you take them in your hand, they burn."

Madame Medýnsky did not evoke in the young man a feeling of sensual attraction, for there was nothing about her which resembled Pelagáya, and, in general, she was not like all other women. He knew that disgraceful things were said about her, but he believed none of them. Still, he changed his attitude toward her, when he saw her in a calash, sitting by the side of a gentleman in a

gray hat, and with long locks of hair hanging on his shoulders. The man's face was like a bladder, red and swollen, he had neither beard nor mustache, and his whole person resembled a woman in man's garb. Fomá was told that this person was her husband. It was then that obscure and contradictory feelings flared up in him: he felt inclined to insult the architect, and, at the same time, he experienced a sensation of envy and respect for him. Madame Medýnsky seemed less beautiful, and more accessible; he began to pity her, and yet he said, maliciously, to himself:

"She must find it very repulsive when he kisses her."

Yet, in spite of all this, he sometimes became conscious of a certain bottomlessly profound, oppressive emptiness within himself, which nothing could fill—neither the impressions of the day just past, nor the memory of days of yore; 'Change, and business affairs, and Madame Medýnsky —all were swallowed up in this gulf. It agitated him; in its gloomy depths he suspected the existence of some power that was hostile to him, though still formless, which was already cautiously and persistently striving to become incarnate.

And, in the meanwhile, Ignát, who had changed little in outward aspect, grew more and more uneasy and querulous, and complained more and more frequently of indisposition.

"I can't sleep—and I used to sleep like a log, and you might have skinned me and I wouldn't have known it. But now, I thrash and turn from side to side, and hardly get to sleep by morning. And I keep waking up—my heart beats unevenly, sometimes like a hunted creature, so fast: 'tuk-tuk-tuk'—and then, all of a sudden, it dies away,—it seems as though it would burst the next minute

and fall down, somewhere, very deep—to my very bowels. —Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy great mercy!"

And with a penitent sigh, he raised his stern eyes, which were already dimmed and had lost their gleam of intelligence, toward heaven.

"Death is lying in wait for me somewhere near at hand," he said, morosely, but submissively. And, in fact, it speedily laid low his huge, powerful body.

This came to pass in August, early one morning. Fomá was sleeping soundly, when he suddenly felt some one shaking him by the shoulder, and heard a hoarse voice close to his ear:

"Get up. ."

He opened his eyes, and saw his father sitting on the chair beside his bed, repeating in a dull monotone:

"Get up, get up."

The sun had just risen, and its light, which fell upon Ignát's white linen shirt, had not yet lost its rosy hue.

"It's early," said Fomá, stretching himself.

"That's all right—you can have your sleep out later."

Wrapping himself lazily in the coverlet, Fomá inquired:

"Is anything wanted?"

"Do get up, my dear boy, I entreat!" cried Ignát, and added, in an offended tone: "Of course, there's something wanted, if I wake you."

On scanning his father's face, Fomá perceived that it was gray and haggard.

"Aren't you feeling well?"

"I feel a little—"

"Do you want the doctor?"

"Oh, hang the doctor!" and Ignát waved his hand. "I'm no infant; I know enough without him."

"What?"

"Well—I know!" said the old man mysteriously, gazing round the room in a rather strange manner. Fomá dressed himself, and his father, dropping his head, said slowly:

"I'm afraid to breathe. . . I have an idea that if I were to take a full breath now my heart would burst. —To-day is Sunday! After the early Liturgy, send for help."

"What ails you, papa?" laughed Fomá.

"Nothing—I—Wash yourself, and go into the garden —I've ordered them to serve the samovár there—and we'll drink tea in the morning freshness. I long for my tea, strong and hot. . Be as quick as you can."

The old man rose heavily from his chair, and, much bowed down, walking uncertainly with his bare feet, he left the room. Fomá stared after his father, and the piercing chill of terror contracted his heart. Washing himself hurriedly, he hastened to the garden.

There, under an aged, wide-spreading apple-tree, sat Ignát in a large oaken arm-chair. The sunlight filtered through the branches of the tree, and fell in slender ribbons upon the white figure of the old man, clad in his night-clothes. It was so impressively still in the garden that even the rustling of a branch, accidentally swept by Fomá's garments, seemed to him a loud sound, and he shivered. In front of his father, on the table, stood the samovár, purring like a well-fed cat, and throwing a stream of steam into the air. In the stillness and freshness of the verdure of the garden, washed on the previous day by an abundant shower, this bright spot of boldly gleaming, noisy copper seemed to Fomá like a superfluous thing, befitting neither the time nor the place—nor the

feeling aroused in him by the sight of the sick, bent man, clothed in white, sitting alone under the shelter of the silent, motionless, dark-green foliage, in which the crimson apples modestly concealed themselves.

"Sit down," said Ignát.

"It would be best to send for the doctor," hesitatingly advised his son, as he sat down opposite him.

"It's not necessary. My distress seems to have passed off in the open air. And when I drink my tea, perhaps I shall feel still more relieved," said Ignát, pouring the tea into the glasses, and Fomá noticed that the tea-pot shook in the old man's hand.

"Drink."

Silently drawing his glass toward him, Fomá bent over it, blowing the froth from its surface, and with a heavy heart listening to his father's short, stertorous breathing.

All at once something clanged on the table so loudly that the tea-things rattled. Fomá shuddered, threw up his head, and met the startled, almost unconscious, gaze of his father. Ignát stared at his son, and whispered hoarsely:

"An apple fell—like a shot! crashed down as though from a gun—didn't it?"

"You'd better take some brandy in your tea," suggested Fomá.

"It's all right as it is."

Both fell silent. A flock of finches flew over the garden, showering their irritatingly merry twitter in the air. And again solemn silence wrapped the mature beauty of the garden in its embrace. The terror had not yet disappeared from Ignát's eyes.

"Oh, Lord Jesus Christ!" he began in a low tone, crossing himself vehemently.—"We-ell—it has come, my last hour of life."

"Enough, papa!" whispered Fomá.

"Enough of what?—come, let's finish our tea, and then do you go for the priest, and my crony."

"I'd better go at once."

"The bells are just ringing for the Liturgy . . you can't get the priest—and there's no hurry, perhaps it will pass off again."

And he began to sip his tea noisily from the saucer.

"I ought to live a year or two longer—you're young, and I have great fears for you.—Live honorably and solidly, —do not covet other men's property, keep a firm hold on your own."

It was difficult for him to speak, he paused, and rubbed his chest with his hand.

"Put no trust in people, do not expect much from them. We all live for the purpose of taking, not of giving . . . Oh Lord! have mercy upon a sinner!"

From somewhere in the distance, the heavy sound of a bell fell upon the morning silence. Ignát and his son crossed themselves thrice.

The first clamor of brass was followed by a second, a third, and soon the air was filled with the sounds of bells ringing for church, which were borne thither from all quarters—calling in smooth, sonorous, measured cadence.

"They have chimed for the Liturgy," said Ignát, listening to the brazen roar. "Do you know the bells by their voices?"

"No," replied Fomá.

"Then listen.—That one—do you hear it?—the bass, belongs to the church of St. Nicholas, the gift of Piótr Mítritch Vyágin; and that other, the hoarse one, to the church of St. Prascóvia Pyátnitza . ."

The singing floods of sound shook the air, which was

filled with them, and melted away in the clear blue of the sky. Fomá gazed thoughtfully at his father's face, and saw that the alarm was vanishing from his eyes, which were growing more animated. But all at once, the old man's face turned a dark red, his eyes opened widely, and started from their sockets, his mouth opened in amazement, and from it proceeded a strange, hissing sound.

"F—f—axh!"

Then Ignát's head dropped on his shoulder, and his cumbrous body sank slowly from the arm-chair to the ground, as though the earth were drawing it imperiously to itself. For a few seconds Fomá did not move or utter a sound, as he gazed at his father with terror and surprise; but then he rushed to Ignát, raised his head from the ground, and gazed into his face. That face was dark, motionless, and the widely opened eyes had no expression: either of pain, or terror, or joy. Fomá looked about him: as before, there was no one in the garden, and the resonant speech of the bells still floated in the air. Fomá's hands trembled, he let go of his father's head, and it struck the earth with a dull blow. Dark, viscid blood flowed in a slender stream from the open mouth across the blue cheek.

Fomá beat his breast with his hands, and kneeling down before the corpse, began to shout wildly and loudly. And quivering all over with fear, he continued, with crazed eyes to seek some one amid the verdure of the garden.

IV

His father's death stunned Fomá and filled him with a strange sensation: tranquillity poured into his soul—an oppressive, motionless tranquillity, which unresistingly engulfed all the sounds of life. Divers persons of his acquaintance bustled around him; they appeared and disappeared, said something to him,—and he answered them at random, and their remarks evoked in him no images, but sank into the bottomless depths of the dead silence which filled his soul. He did not weep, did not grieve, and thought of nothing; pale, and gloomy, with knitted brows, he listened concentratedly to this silence, which expelled from within him all feelings, laid waste his heart, and grasped his brain like a vise. His consciousness was accessible only to the purely-physical sensation of heaviness in his whole body, and most of all, in his breast, and it seemed to him still that twilight had descended, although the sun was still high in the heavens,—and that everything on earth had, in some way, grown dark and sad.

Mayákin took charge of the funeral. He ran hastily and alertly through the rooms, clicking the heels of his boots firmly, shouted, in a masterful way, at the servants, slapped his god-son on the shoulder, and comforted him:

"And why are you turned to stone, my lad? Roar, and it will relieve you. Your father was old—worn out in body,—Death is prepared for us all—there's no escaping it—so there's no use of turning deadly pale before one's time. You can't bring him to life again with your sorrow,

and he does not need your grief, for it is said: "When the soul must needs be torn from the body by dread angels, it forgetteth all its kinsfolk and its acquaintance . ." so whatever you do now is nothing to him, whether you laugh or weep. But you, a living man, must take heed for the living. You'd better cry—that's man's way—'tis a great relief to the heart."

But these remarks had no effect whatever, either upon Fomá's head or upon his heart.

He recovered himself on the day of the funeral, thanks to the persistency of his god-father, who kept diligently trying, in his own peculiar way, to rouse his crushed spirit.

The day of the funeral was cloudy and overcast. A huge mass of people walked after Ignát Gordyéeff's coffin, like a long, black ribbon, in a dense cloud of dust; in the throng gleamed the gold of the priests' vestments, and the dull murmur of its slow motion merged with the solemn music of the Bishop's choir of singers. Fomá was shoved from behind and from the sides; he walked on, seeing nothing except his father's gray head,[1] and the mournful chanting found an echo in his breast. But Mayákin, who walked beside him, whispered importunately and unremittingly in his ear:

"See what a crowd of people are following him—thousands! The Governor himself has come to escort your father—the Mayor of the town,—almost the entire Council, —and behind you—just turn round! Sófya Ivánovna is walking. The town has done honor to Ignát."

At first Fomá paid no heed to his god-father's whispers, but when the latter told him about Madame Medýnsky, he involuntarily glanced back and beheld the Governor.

[1] In Russia, the coffins (in accordance with ancient custom) are carried open, the lid being borne after them.—*Translator.*

A tiny little drop of some agreeable sensation trickled into his soul at the sight of that great man, with the gay ribbon of some Order over his shoulder, with Orders on his breast, walking behind the coffin, with grief depicted on his stern countenance.

"Blessed is the way which today thou treadest, O soul"[1] chimed in Yákoff Tarásovitch, wagging his nose, and began again to whisper in the ear of his god-son: "Seventy-five thousand rubles—'tis a sum for which one has a right to demand so many mourners. Have you heard that Sónka has appointed the laying of the corner-stone for the fifteenth? That will be precisely the fortieth day after his death."[2]

Again Fomá turned round, and his eyes encountered the eyes of Madame Medýnsky. He sighed deeply at her caressing glance, and immediately felt better, as though a burning ray of light had penetrated his soul, and something had thawed there. And he immediately reflected that it was not proper for him to turn his head from side to side.

In the church, Fomá's head began to ache, and it began to seem to him as though everything around him and beneath him were rocking. In the stifling air, laden with dust, the breaths of the people, and the smoke of the incense, the tiny flames of the candles quivered timidly. The mild face of the Christ gazed down upon him from the great holy image, and the flames of the tapers, reflected in the dull gold of the crown above the Saviour's brow, were suggestive of drops of blood.

Fomá's awakened soul eagerly drank in the solemnly-

[1] One of the Funeral Chants.—*Translator.*

[2] The ninth, twentieth and fortieth days after death are specially observed as important, with requiem services, in the Russian Church. —*Translator.*

gloomy poetry of the Liturgy, and when the touching summons rang out: "Come, let us bestow the last kiss," there burst forth from Fomá's breast such a tremendous, wailing sob, that the throng in the church surged in agitation with this cry.

As he cried out, he reeled as he stood. His god-father instantly grasped him under the arms, and began to push him forward to the coffin, chanting in a tolerably loud tone, and with a certain zeal:

"'Ki-i-iss him that was but lately with u-us' . . . kiss him, Fomá, kiss him! . . . 'for he is committed to the to-omb, he is covered with a sto-one—he taketh up his abo-ode in the darkness, he is buried with the dead.'"[1]

Fomá touched his lips to his father's brow, and sprang back from the coffin in terror.

"Be careful! You came near knocking me down," Mayákin said to him, in a low tone, and these simple, composed words, afforded Fomá a firmer support than the arm of his god-father.

"Behold me lying voiceless and without breath, weep for me, my brethren and my friends," entreated Ignát, by the voice of the Church. But his son was no longer weeping: his father's black, swollen face had bred terror in him, and this terror, in some degree, sobered his spirit, intoxicated with the Church's melancholy music of mourning for her sinful son. Acquaintances gathered round him, impressively and caressingly comforting him: he heard them, and understood that all of them were sorry for him, and that he had become dear to all of them. But his god-father whispered in his ear:

"Observe how they are making up to you . . the cats smell out the tallow . ."

[1] Part of the Funeral Chants.—*Translator.*

These words displeased Fomá, but were of service to him, in that they forced him to reply to them in one way or another.

At the cemetery, while the "Eternal Memory!" was being sung, he again burst into loud and bitter weeping. His god-father immediately grasped him by the arm, and led him away from the grave, saying to him, with anger:

"Oh, what a poor-spirited fellow you are, my boy! Am not I sorry also? For I knew his real worth, but you were merely his son. But see, I'm not weeping. We lived together, on the most intimate terms, for over thirty years,—and how much we said, how much we thought . . . how much grief we quaffed together!—You're young, why should you mourn? You have the whole of your life before you, and you'll be rich in every sort of friendship. But I am old,—and they have buried my one friend, and I am become like a pauper—I can never win another friend after my own heart!"

The old man's voice quivered strangely, and squeaked. His face writhed, his lips expanded in a huge grimace, and trembled, his wrinkles flowed together, and down them, from his little eyes, small tears ran, thick and fast. He was so touchingly pitiful and unlike himself, that Fomá halted, pressed him to his bosom with the tenderness of a strong man, and cried, in agitation:

"Don't cry, little papa—my darling! Don't cry."

"It's over now!" ejaculated Mayákin weakly, and with a heavy sigh, he became suddenly converted once more into a firm, clever old man.

"You mustn't break down today like a weakling," he said privately, as he seated himself beside his god-son in the calash.—"You're the leader of an army in battle, now, and you must command your soldiers bravely. And your

soldiers are—rubles, and you have a va-ast army of them. Mind that you fight!"

Fomá, amazed at the swiftness of his transformation, listened to his words, and, for some reason or other, they reminded him of the thuds of the clods of earth which the people had thrown into Ignát's grave, upon his coffin.

"With whom am I to fight?" said Fomá, sighing.

"I'll soon teach you! Didn't your father tell you that I'm a clever old man, and that you were to heed my words?"

"Yes."

"Then do it! If we combine my wisdom with your young powers, we shall be able to win a fine victory. Your father was a great man . . but he did not look far ahead, and he did not understand how to heed me. And in his life he won success not by his brain, but, rather through his heart. Okh! something can be made of you. Do you move over to my house, or you'll find it painful alone in your house."

"My aunt is there."

"Your aunt—is an invalid; she will not live long."

"Don't speak of that," entreated Fomá softly.

"Yes, I will speak of it. You need have no fear of death—you're not an old woman dying on the oven. Do you live without fear, and do what you were appointed to do. And a man is appointed to organize life on the earth. A man is capital; like a ruble, he is made up of trumpery copper coins and kopéks. From the dust of the earth, as it is written.—But, in proportion as he circulates in life, and absorbs tallow and oil, sweat and tears, mind and soul are created in him. And from that time forth he begins to grow, both upward and downward . . . and the first you know, he has a value—one man two kopéks, another a fifteen-kopék silver piece, another a hundred rubles—and

sometimes he is above all price. He is put into circulation, and must earn interest for life. Life teaches us all our value, and it will not call us out of circulation until the right time comes . . no one, my boy, ever acts to his own loss, if he is wise . . and life has amassed a lot of wisdom. Are you listening to me?"

"Yes."

"And how much do you understand?"

"Everything."

"You're talking nonsense, I believe?" said Mayákin doubtfully.

"Only—why must one die?" asked Fomá softly.

His god-father cast a compassionate glance at his face, smacked his lips, and said:

"A wise man never asks that question. A wise man perceives for himself, that if there is a river, it flows away somewhere—and if it stood still, there would be a swamp."

"You are sneering at me at random," said Fomá surlily, "the ocean does not flow away anywhere."

"It receives all the rivers into itself,—and there are mighty hurricanes upon it. Thus the ocean of life is fed by the emotion of mankind—and death renews its waters, that they may not become stagnant. If people did not die, they would become more and more numerous."

"What of that? My father died . ."

"And you will die also."

"What concern of mine is it that people increase more and more?" said Fomá, with a melancholy smile.

"Eh-ekhe-e!" sighed Mayákin. "And whom does it not concern.—Your breeches would, certainly, reason in the same manner: What concern is it of ours that there is as much cloth on the earth as anyone wants? But you don't heed them—you wear them out, and throw them away."

Fomá gazed reproachfully at his god-father, and perceiving that the old man was smiling, he was astonished and respectfully inquired:

"Is it possible, papásha, that you do not fear death?"

"My child, I fear stupidity more than anything else," replied Mayákin, with subdued venom. "This is what I think: if a fool offers you honey—spit it out; if a wise man offers you poison—drink it! I'll tell you what: the perch is a weak-spirited fish, if his bristles don't stand upright."

The old man's jeering words offended and enraged Fomá. He turned aside, and said:

"Can't you speak without all these subterfuges?"

"No, I can't!" exclaimed Mayákin, and his eyes flashed alarmingly. "Every man expresses himself in the language which he can command. Do I appear harsh? What of it?"

Fomá made no reply.

"Oh bother you! See here, you must know that he who loves instructs. And as for death, don't think of it . . 'tis foolish, my boy, for a living man to think of death. 'Ecclesiastes' thought better than anyone else concerning it,—he thought and said that even a live dog is better than a dead lion."

They reached home. The whole street in front of the house was blocked with carriages, and loud conversation was wafted on the air from the open windows. As soon as Fomá made his appearance in the hall, he was seized by the arms and dragged to the table where the viands of the appetizer were set out, and was urged to eat and drink something. It was as noisy in the hall as though it had been the bazaar; it was crowded and stifling. Fomá silently drank off one glass of vódka, a second, and a third. All around him people were chewing and smacking their lips

and vódka was gurgling, as it was poured from the bottle, and the glasses clinked. They were chatting about dried sturgeon's back, and the bass voice of the soloist in the Bishop's choir, and then again about dried sturgeon's back, and that the mayor of the town wanted to make a speech, but could not bring himself to do it, after the Bishop, for fear he might not speak as well as the latter. Someone narrated with emotion:

"This is what the deceased used to do: he would cut off a slice of salmon, pepper it thickly, cover it with another slice, and send it down after a glass of liquor."

"Le-et's follow his example," roared a heavy bass voice.

Fomá, frowning, with rage in his heart, stared at the fat lips and jaws which were chewing the savory viands, and he wanted to shriek aloud, and drive out all those people whose solidity had so recently aroused his respect for them.

"Be more affable—more talkative," said Mayákin, in a low voice, appearing beside him.

"Why are they gobbling here? Have they come to an eating-house, I'd like to know?" said Fomá loudly and wrathfully.

"Hussssh!" said Mayákin, in terror, and swiftly glanced about with an amiable smile on his face.

But it was too late: his smile did not help matters. Fomá's words had been heard,—the uproar and chatter in the hall began to decrease, some of the guests bustled about in a rather hurried way, others, frowning angrily, laid down their knives and forks, and quitted the table with the appetizer, and all gazed askance at Fomá.

Angry and silent, he met their glances, without lowering his eyes.

"Pray come to the table!" shouted Mayákin, flitting through the throng of people like a spark through ashes.—

"Please sit down! The pancakes will be served immediately."

Fomá shrugged his shoulders, and went to the door, remarking loudly:

"I'm not going to eat any dinner."

He heard a disagreeable murmur behind him, and the insinuating voice of his god-father saying to someone:

"It's his grief—you know that Ignát was father and mother both to him."

Fomá went into the garden, to the spot where his father had died, and sat down there. A feeling of loneliness and sorrow oppressed his breast. He unbuttoned his shirt-collar, in order to ease his breathing, set his elbows on the table, and clutching his head in his hands, became motionless as a statue. A fine rain was drizzling down, and the leaves of the apple-tree rustled in a melancholy way under the drip of the rain. He sat a long time thus alone, without moving, watching the fine rain-drops fall from the apple-tree upon the table. There was a roaring in his head, produced by the vódka he had drunk, and his heart imbibed anger at mankind. Undefined, impersonal feelings and thoughts sprang up within him, and vanished; before him flitted the bare skull of his god-father, in its wreath of silver hair, and with a dark face, like the faces of ancient holy pictures. This face, with its toothless mouth, and viper-like smile, which evoked in Fomá disgust and fear, still further increased his consciousness of loneliness. Then he recalled Madame Medýnsky's gentle eyes, her tiny, well-proportioned figure, and alongside her, for some reason or other, stood the robust, tall, rosy Liubóff Mayákin, with laughing eyes, and a huge braid of ruddy-gold hair.—"Do not trust people—don't expect much of them," his father's words rang through his memory. He sighed mournfully,

and looked about him. The leaves on the trees were fluttering under the rain, and the air was full of sad sounds. The gray sky seemed to be weeping, and cold tears trembled on the trees. But Fomá's soul was dark and dry; a painful sensation of orphanhood filled it. But this feeling gave birth to the question:

"How am I to live? I'm alone now."

The rain had soaked his clothing, and he felt a shiver of cold, rose, and went to the house.

Life tugged at him on all sides, giving him no opportunity to concentrate his attention on his meditations and grief for his father, and on the fortieth day after Ignát's death, he went to the ceremony of laying the corner-stone of the night lodging-house, in full dress, and with an agreeable sensation in his breast. On the preceding day, Madame Medýnsky had informed him, by letter, that he had been elected a member of the building committee, and an honorary member of the society over which she presided. This gratified him, and he was greatly agitated by the part which he must play at the laying of the corner-stone that day. As he drove, he thought over how it would all be, and how he ought to behave, in order not to be abashed before the people.

"Hey, hey! Pull up!"

He glanced round,—Mayákin ran quickly to him from the sidewalk, clad in a frock-coat which reached to his heels, and a tall cap, and with a huge umbrella under his arm.

"Come, give me a lift," said the old man, springing into the carriage with the agility of a monkey.—"I confess that I have been lying in wait for you, I kept on the watch; 'tis time for him to drive past,' I said to myself."

"Are you going there?" inquired Fomá.

"Of course. I must see how they bury my friend's money in the earth."

Fomá cast a sidelong glance at him, and said nothing.

"What are you squinting at me for? Never fear, you'll turn out a benefactor of the people also."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Fomá warily.

"I read in the newspaper today, that you have been elected a member of the committee for that house, and also to Sófya's society, as an honorary member . ."

"Yes, I have been elected."

"That membership will gnaw into your pocket!" sighed Mayákin.

"I shall not ruin myself, I suppose?"

"I don't know about that," said the old man spitefully. "The more so, as this philanthropic business isn't very wise . . and even, as I say, this isn't business, but mere harmful nonsense."

"It is harmful to help people?" asked Fomá with vexation.

"Oh you head of the garden—that is to say, you cabbage-head!" said Mayákin with a smile. "You just come to my house, and I'll open your eyes for you as to this whole matter—I'll give you a lesson! Will you come?"

"Very well," assented Fomá.

"Well, then . . . And, in the meanwhile, conduct yourself haughtily at this laying of the corner-stone—stand out in full sight of everybody. Don't let them say of you that you are hiding yourself behind anyone's back."

"Why should I hide myself?" said Fomá, involuntarily.

"I'll tell you why: for no reason at all. For the money was given by your father, and the esteem should descend to the heir. Esteem is the same as money . . with esteem a merchant finds credit everywhere—and the way is everywhere open to him. Do you step up to the front, so that everyone may see you, and so that if you have con-

tributed a five-kopék bit, they may reward you with a ruble. But you'll hide yourself—you'll perpetrate some folly or other."

They arrived at the spot when all the important personages were already assembled, and a vast throng of people already surrounded the piles of lumber, bricks, and earth. The Bishop, the Governor, and the representatives of the local aristocracy, and administration, formed, together with the elegantly attired ladies, a brilliant group, who were gazing at a couple of stone-masons, engaged in preparing bricks and mortar. Mayákin and his god-son directed their steps toward this group, and the former whispered to Fomá:

"Don't get shy. They've robbed their bellies to cover their backs."

And respectfully, in a merry tone, he greeted the Governor before the Bishop.

"Good-morning, your Excellency! Your blessing, your Right Reverence!"

"Ah, Yákoff Tarásovitch!" exclaimed the Governor in a friendly tone, pressing Mayákin's hand with a smile and shaking it as the old man kissed the Bishop's hand. "How are you, you immortal old man?"

"My humble thanks, your Excellency! My most profound respects to Sófya Pávlovna!" said Mayákin hastily, winding like a wolf through the throng of people. In a minute he had managed to salute the representatives of the courts, and the procurator, and the Mayor—everyone whom he considered it necessary to greet first; but there were not many such. He jested and smiled, and instantly attracted the attention of all to his tiny figure, but Fomá stood behind him, with drooping head, casting sidelong glances at these people embroidered with gold and garbed

in costly materials; he envied his god-father's boldness, and grew shy, and was conscious that he did so,—and so grew still more shy. But now his god-father grasped him by the hand, and dragged him along.

"Here, your Excellency, this is my god-son, Fomá, the only son of the late Ignát."

"A-ah!" said the Governor in a deep bass voice. "Delighted. I sympathize with your grief, young man!" he said, as he pressed Fomá's hand, and stopped short; then he added, confidently and decisively: "It is a very great misfortune to lose a father."

And, after waiting a couple of seconds for Fomá's reply, he turned away from him, saying approvingly to Mayákin:

"I am enraptured over your speech in the council yesterday! It was fine, clever, Yákoff Tarásovitch—in proposing to expend money on that People's Club, they do not comprehend the real needs of the population."

"And then, your Excellency, the capital is extremely small—which means that the town would be obliged to add to it."

"Quite true! Quite true!"

"Temperance is a good thing, say I! God grant it to everyone. I do not drink, myself—but why these plays, reading-rooms, and all that sort of thing, if the people don't know how to read?"

The Governor bellowed approvingly.

"And so, I say, do you take this money and apply it to technical education. . If we establish that on a small scale, this money in hand will suffice, and, on occasion, we can ask for more from St. Petersburg,—and they will give it to us. Then the town will not have to contribute any of its own, and it will be a more sensible piece of business."

"Exactly so! And I entirely agree with you! But how the liberals did shout at you, didn't they? Ha, ha!"

"That's all they're good for, to shout."

The deep cough of the proto-deacon of the Cathedral announced the beginning of the religious service.

Sófya Pávlovna stepped up to Fomá, greeted him, and said to him, in a soft, sad voice:

"I watched your face on the day of the funeral, and my heart ached. 'Heavens,' I said to myself, 'how he must be suffering!'"

And Fomá listened to her—and it was like honey to him.

"Those cries of yours! They shook my very soul.—My poor boy! I can address you thus, because I am quite an old woman."

"You!" exclaimed Fomá softly.

"Am I not?" she asked, gazing ingenuously into his face.

Fomá made no reply, but dropped his head.

"Don't you believe that I am an old woman?"

"I do believe you—that is, I believe everything you say—only, that is not true!" said Fomá, in a low, fervent tone.

"What is not true? That you believe me?"

"No! not that, but that—I—forgive me! I do not know how to express myself!" said Fomá sadly, crimsoning all over with confusion.—"I'm not cultured."

"There's no need to feel troubled over that," said Madame Medýnsky in a protecting way. "You are young yet, and culture is accessible to everyone. But there are people who not only do not need it, but whom it is liable to spoil. They are men who have pure hearts, who are confiding, sincere as children,—and you are one of those people. You are, aren't you?"

What reply could Fomá make to such a question? He said sincerely:

"I am deeply grateful to you!"

And perceiving that his words had called forth a merry gleam in Madame Medýnsky's eyes, he felt that he was ridiculous and silly, and immediately waxed wroth at himself, and said, in a suppressed voice:

"Yes, I am one of those people—whatever is in my soul, drops off my tongue. I do not know how to pretend—if I find a thing ridiculous, I laugh openly. I'm stupid!"

"Well, and why are you so?" said the woman softly; and as she adjusted her gown, with her lowered hand she accidentally stroked the hand in which he held his hat, which caused Fomá to glance at his wrist, and smile confusedly but joyfully.

"Of course you will be at the dinner?" inquired Madame Medýnsky.

"Yes."

"And to-morrow you are coming to the meeting at my house?"

"Without fail!"

"And, perhaps, some day, you will just drop in, quite simply, to call?"

"I—thank you! I will come!"

"I must thank you for that promise."

They became silent. The soft, reverent voice of the Bishop floated on the air, as he expressively recited a prayer, with his hand outstretched over the place where the corner-stone was to be laid.

"Let neither wind, nor water, nor any other thing be able to injure it: be graciously pleased to bring it to a conclusion, and free them that shall dwell therein from every assault of the enemy. ."

"How rich in contents and how beautiful our prayers are, are they not?" asked Madame Medýnsky.

"Yes," replied Fomá briefly, not understanding her words, and conscious that he was blushing again.

"They will always be the adversaries of our mercantile interests," whispered Mayákin loudly and with conviction, as he stood not far from Fomá, beside the Mayor of the town. "What is it they want? All they want is something wherewith they may win the approbation of the newspapers . . but they can't attain to any real substance. . They live for show, and not to organize life—and these are their measures: the newspapers and Switzerland! There was the doctor yesterday—he sneered at me the whole time with that Switzerland: 'there's popular education in Switzerland,' said he, 'and everything else there is first-class!' But what's that Switzerland, anyway? Perhaps Switzerland is an invention, to quote as an example,—and there's no education or any of the other various things in it at all! And then, again, we don't live for it, and it can't conduct our examinations—we must make our life on our own last. Isn't that so?"

And the proto-deacon, throwing back his head, roared:

"To the fo-ounder of the ho-ouse, e-eter-nal me-emory!"

Fomá shuddered, but Mayákin was already by his side, and grasping his arms, inquired:

"Are you going to the dinner?"

And Madame Medýnsky's warm, velvet-soft little hand again slipped along Fomá's hand.

The dinner was genuine torture for Fomá. Finding himself, for the first time in his life, among such gorgeous people, he perceived that they ate, and talked, and did everything better than he did, and he felt that he was

separated from Madame Medýnsky, who sat directly opposite him, not by the table but by a lofty mountain. Beside him sat the secretary of the society of which Fomá had been elected an honorary member,—a young official of the law courts, who bore the peculiar surname of Úkhtishtcheff. As though with the specific object of making his surname seem even more clumsy than it already was, he talked in a high, resonant tenor voice, and altogether—the plump, small, chubby-faced and jolly chatterer resembled a brand-new sleigh-bell.

"The best thing about our society is, its patroness; the most sensible thing we occupy ourselves with, in it, is making love to the patroness; the most difficult thing is to pay the patroness a compliment which satisfies her; and the wisest thing is to go into silent, hopeless raptures over the patroness. So, as a matter of fact, you are an honorary member not 'of the Society for,' and so forth, but a member of the Society of Tantaluses, comprised of Sófya Medýnsky's flatterers."

Fomá listened to his chatter, gazed at the patroness, who was anxiously discussing something with the Chief of Police, grunted, by way of answer to his companion, feigning to be occupied in eating, and wished that the whole thing might come to an end as speedily as possible. He felt that he was a pitiful, stupid, ridiculous object to all of them, and he was convinced that they were all watching him, and condemning him. This fettered him with invisible shackles, which permitted him neither to speak nor to think. At last he reached the point where the line of various physiognomies extending down the table opposite him, began to seem to him a long, wavy, white streak, with jeering eyes punched in it, and all those eyes pierced him in a tormentingly disagreeable manner.

But Mayákin sat beside the Mayor of the town, waved his fork rapidly in the air, and kept saying something to him, his wrinkles shifting and changing the while. The Mayor, a gray-haired, red-faced man, with a short neck, stared at him like a bull with stubborn attention, and occasionally tapped the edge of the table with his thumb, in token of assent. The animated conversation and laughter drowned his god-father's emphatic remarks, and Fomá could not catch a word of them; the more so, as the light tenor voice of the secretary rang incessantly in his ears the whole time:

"Look! the proto-deacon has risen to his feet, and is charging his lungs with air. . . Pretty soon he will proclaim 'Eternal Memory' to Ignát Matvyéevitch."

"Can't I go away?" asked Fomá softly.

"Why not? Everyone will understand."

The deacon's ringing exclamation overpowered and seemed to crush the uproar in the hall; the distinguished merchants stared in rapture at the widely-opened mouth, from which poured forth the heavy bass voice, and, taking advantage of the opportunity, Fomá rose from the table and quitted the hall.

A moment later, breathing freely once more, he had seated himself in his calash, and was anxiously reflecting that the society of those gentlemen and ladies was no place for him. To himself he called them smooth-licked; their brilliancy did not please him; he disliked their faces, their smiles, their words; but the freedom and ease of their movements, their power of talking about everything, and, lastly, their handsome costumes,—all these things aroused in him a mixture of envy and respect for them. He felt injured and sad that he could not talk so easily and so much as all these people did, and then he recol-

lected that Liúba Mayákin had made fun of him more than once, for that very thing.

Fomá did not like Mayákin's daughter, and after he learned from Ignát of his god-father's intention to marry him to Liúba, young Gordyéeff began to avoid even meeting her. But after his father's death, he was at the Mayákins' house nearly every day, and on one occasion Liúba said to him:

"I am looking you over, and do you know what? —You're as unlike a merchant as possible."

"And you're very unlike a merchant's wife," said Fomá, staring suspiciously at her.

He did not comprehend the significance of her words: whether she intended them as an insult, or had simply uttered them without any ulterior meaning.

"Thank heaven!" she answered him, with such a nice, friendly smile.

"Why are you glad?" he inquired.

"That we are not like our parents."

Fomá gazed at her in amazement, and said nothing.

"Tell me frankly," she said, lowering her voice, "you don't like my father, do you? He displeases you?"

"Not—so very much," said Fomá slowly.

"Well, I don't like him at all."

"Why?"

"For every sort of reason. When you grow wiser, you'll understand for yourself, without being told. Your father was nicer."

"Of course!" said Fomá proudly.

After this conversation, a mutual attraction sprang up almost immediately between them, and, increasing day by day, it soon assumed the character of friendship, though of rather a strange friendship.

Liúba was of the same age as her god-brother, but bore herself toward him like an older sister to a boy. She spoke condescendingly, often made fun of him, and words which were unknown to Fomá constantly made their appearance in her speech, and she pronounced them with a certain special emphasis, and with evident satisfaction. She was particularly fond of talking about her brother Tarás, whom she had never seen, but concerning whom she was wont to relate a tale which made him resemble Aunt Anfísa's brave and noble-minded bandits. Often, when complaining of her father, she said to Fomá:

"And you'll be just such another skinflint."

All this displeased the young man, and deeply wounded his vanity. But, at times, she was direct, simple, with a certain amicably caressing manner toward him; at such times he opened his heart to her, and they displayed to each other, at considerable length, their thoughts and feelings.

Both talked a great deal, and frankly—and neither understood the other: it seemed to Fomá that everything Liúba talked about was foreign to him, and unnecessary to her, and, at the same time, he saw clearly, that his ignorant remarks did not interest her in the least, and that she did not care to understand them. No matter how much time they spent in this sort of conversation, the only sensation which it afforded them was of a certain awkwardness, and dissatisfaction with each other. It seemed as though an invisible wall of misunderstanding suddenly started up between them, and separated them. They could not make up their minds to touch that wall, to say to each other that they were conscious of it, and they went on with their discussions, feeling, in a confused way, that in each of them there existed something which might bring them together and unite them.

On arriving at his god-father's house, Fomá found Liúba alone. She came out to meet him, and it was evident that she was either ill or preoccupied: her eyes flashed uneasily, and were surrounded by black rings. Wrapping herself, with a shiver, in a small goat's-down shawl, she said with a smile:

"It's a good thing that you have come! I have been sitting alone . . it's tiresome, and I don't feel like going anywhere. Will you have some tea?"

"Yes. What's the matter with you? Are you ill?"

"Go into the dining-room, and I will order the samovár to be prepared," she said, without answering his question.

He entered one of the tiny rooms in the house, with two windows opening on the small garden. In the middle of the room stood an oval table, surrounded by old-fashioned chairs upholstered in leather; on one of the partition-walls hung a clock, in a long case, with a glass door; in the corner stood a what-not, filled with plates and dishes, and against the wall opposite the windows was an oaken sideboard, of the dimensions of a good-sized store-room.

"Have you just come from the dinner?" asked Liúba, as she entered.

Fomá nodded silently.

"Well, was it very gorgeous?"

"Awfully!" laughed Fomá.—"I was on needles and pins . . they were all like peacocks and I was like a barn-owl."

Liúba took some cups and saucers from the what-not, and made no reply.

"Why are you so bored?" Fomá resumed, glancing at her gloomy countenance.

She turned toward him, and said with rapture and distress:

"Ah, Fomá! What a book I have been reading! If you could only understand it!"

"Evidently, it's a good book, if it has upset you so," remarked Fomá, laughing.

"I did not sleep—I read all night. You understand: you read, and it seems as though doors flew open before you into some other realm . . The people are different, and their language, and—everything is different! It's the whole of life! . . ."

"I don't like such books," said Fomá, in displeasure. "They're inventions, delusions. There's the theatre . . Merchants are held up to ridicule,—and are they really such fools? The idea! Take my god-father, for example . ."

"The theatre is the same as school, Fomá," said Liúba didactically. "The merchants used to be like that.—And what delusion can there be in books?"

"The same as in the fairy-tales . . Nothing is real."

"You are mistaken! You have never read books,—so how can you judge? It is precisely they that are real. They teach one to live."

"Oh, come now!" and Fomá dismissed the subject with a wave of his hand.—"Drop it . . . you'll get no good out of your books! There's your father—he doesn't read books, but—isn't he a clever one! I've been watching him today, and I envy him. He knows so well how to treat people,—freely, intelligently, he has a word for everybody. You can see, at once, that he will obtain what he wants."

"What does he obtain?" cried Liúba. "Nothing but money . . And there are men who desire happiness for everyone on earth—and therefore, never sparing themselves, they toil and suffer and perish! Is it possible to compare my father with them?"

"Don't try. Probably, one thing pleases them, another thing pleases your father."

"Nothing pleases them!"

"How so?"

"They want to change everything."

"So they are making an effort for something or other?" retorted Fomá, thoughtfully.—"They do want something?"

"Happiness for all men!" cried Liúba warmly.

"Well, I don't understand that," said Fomá, shaking his head. "Who's bothering himself about my happiness? And then again, what happiness can they arrange for me, if I myself don't yet know what I want? Now, see here,—what you ought to do is to observe those people who were at the dinner."

"They're not people!" exclaimed Liúba, categorically.

"Well, I don't pretend to know what they are according to your ideas, but one thing is instantly perceptible—that they know their place. They're a clever, easy set."

"Oh, Fomá!" cried Liúba in vexation, "you don't understand anything! Nothing agitates you! You're such an indolent fellow!"

"There she goes! I simply haven't looked about me yet."

"You simply are—a goose," declared Liúba, firmly and decisively.

"You haven't been inside my soul," retorted Fomá calmly.—"You don't know my thoughts."

"What have you to think about?" said Liúba, shrugging her shoulders.

"What indeed! Am I alone? That's one thing.—Have I got to live? That's another. It isn't possible for me to live in my present fashion—don't I understand that? I don't want to be a laughing-stock. Why, I don't even know how to talk to people. Yes—and I don't know how to think," Fomá concluded his harangue, and laughed in confusion.

"You must read, you must study," Liúba advised with conviction, as she paced up and down the room.

"Something is stirring in my soul," went on Fomá, without looking at her, and as though talking to himself, "but I cannot understand it. Here I see that my god-father can talk—that's the whole business—and cleverly . . But he doesn't attract me. Those other people are far more interesting to me."

"The aristocracy, you mean?" inquired Liúba.

"Yes."

"That's a nice place for you!" said Liúba, with a scornful smile.—"Oh, you stupid! They are not people, are they? Have they souls?"

"What do you know about them? Why, you are not even acquainted with them."

"And how about my books? Haven't I read?"

The maid brought in the samovár, and the conversation came to an end. Liúba brewed the tea in silence, Fomá watched her, and thought of Madame Medýnsky. He wanted to talk with Madame Medýnsky.

"Ye-es," the young girl began again meditatively, "every day, I am more and more convinced that it is difficult to live . . What am I to do? Marry? Whom? Some petty merchant, who will spend his life in robbing people, drinking, playing cards? An uncultured man? I will not! I want to be an individual—I am an individual, because I understand how badly life is arranged. Study? As though my father would allow me . . Good God! Run away? I lack the courage . . —What am I to do?"

She clasped her hands, and bowed her head upon the table.

"If you only knew how repulsive everything is . . There's not a living soul about. Since my mother's death,

my father has chased everyone away. Some have gone off to study. Lípa has gone: She writes: 'Read!' Ah, I do read! I do read!" she cried, with despair in her voice, and after a momentary pause, she resumed, sadly:

"The books do not contain what the heart needs—and there is much in them which I do not understand . . In short, I am bored—it bores me to read alone, always alone! I want to talk with a man, and there is no man! I loathe it. I have but one life, and it's time to begin to live—but still there is no man, none! What's the use of living? Lípa says: 'Read, you will understand . .' I want bread, and she gives me a stone . . I understand what is necessary —that one must defend what he loves, what he believes; he must contend."

And she wound up, almost with a groan:

"But I am alone! With whom am I to contend? There are no enemies—no people! Why, I live in a prison!"

Fomá listened to her speech, staring intently at her fingers the while, and was conscious of an immense woe in her words, but he did not understand her. And when she ceased speaking, crushed and sad, he could find nothing to say to her, except words which were akin to blame.

"There, you say yourself that your little books are worth nothing to you, and yet you order me to read!"

She glanced at his face, and anger flashed in her eyes.

"Oh, how I wish that all these torments would wake up within you—the torments in which I live . . How I wish that you, like myself, could not sleep at night for thinking, that everything should disgust you—and that you should be disgusting to yourself! I hate you all—I hate you!"

She was all in a flush, and she gazed so wrathfully at him, and spoke so viciously, that, in his amazement, he

did not even take offence. Never yet had she talked to him in that way.

"What's the matter with you?" he asked her.

"And I hate you too! You—what are you? A dead body, a frivolous man—how are you going to live? What will you give to mankind?" she asked, in a low tone, and with apparent malice.

"I shall give nothing, let them earn for themselves," replied Fomá, aware that, by these words, he should anger her still more.

"You wretched creature!" cried the girl disdainfully.

The conviction and power of her reproaches involuntarily caused Fomá to listen attentively to her fierce speeches; he felt that there was some sense in them. He even moved nearer to her, but she, indignant and angry, turned away from him, and remained silent.

It was still light out of doors, and the reflection of the sunset still lay upon the branches of the lindens in front of the house, but the room was already filled with gloom, and the side-board, clock and what-not, wrapped in it, seemed to have enlarged their outlines. The huge pendulum peeped out every second from the glass of the clock-case, and gleaming dully, hid itself, with a faint, weary sound, now on the right, now on the left. Fomá stared at the pendulum, and felt bored and uncomfortable. Liúba rose and lighted the lamp which hung over the table. The girl's face was pale and harsh.

"You have fallen foul of me," began Fomá soberly, "what for? I can't understand."

"I won't talk with you," retorted Liúba angrily.

"As you like. But nevertheless—what have I done that is wrong?"

"You must know that I'm stifling! I feel cooped up.

Surely, this isn't life? Is this a way for people to live? Who am I? A parasite on my father . . he supports me to do the housekeeping . . and then, I'm to marry! more housekeeping. It's a quagmire, I'm drowning, I'm stifling."

"And what have I to do with it?" asked Fomá.

"You—you're no better than the others."

"And of what am I guilty towards you?"

"Guilty? You ought to wish—to be better . ."

"Well, and don't I wish that?!" exclaimed Fomá.

The girl was on the point of saying something to him, but at that moment, a bell tinkled somewhere in the distance, and throwing herself back in her chair, she said, in a low tone:

"It's father."

"Well, if he had waited a while longer, we shouldn't have fretted," said Fomá.—"I'd like to listen to you again . . you're awfully queer . ."

"Ah! My children, my dark-blue doves!" exclaimed Yákoff Tarásovitch, making his appearance in the doorway. —"Are you drinking tea? Pour me out some, Liubáva!"

Smiling sweetly and rubbing his hands, he seated himself beside Fomá, and playfully punching him in the ribs, he inquired:

"What were you cooing about chiefly?"

"Oh—various trifles," replied Liúba.

"Who asked you?" her father said to her, screwing up his face.—"You sit there and hold your tongue, over your woman's business."

"I have told her about the dinner," Fomá interrupted his god-father's speech.

"Aha! Ju-ust so! Well, and I'll talk about the dinner also. I was watching you awhile ago . . . you behaved preposterously."

"How so?" asked Fomá, involuntarily contracting his brows.

"Why, downright preposterously, and that's all there is to it. The Governor addresses you, for example, and you say not a word."

"What should I say to him? He said, that it was a great misfortune to lose a father . . well, I know that. What is there to say to him?"

"'Inasmuch as it was sent to me by the Lord, I do not repine, your Excellency.'—That's what you ought to say, or something in that style. Governors, my good fellow, are very fond of submission in a man."

"Why should I stare at him like a sheep?" laughed Fomá.

"You did stare at him like a sheep,—and that's wrong. You don't need to look like either a sheep or a wolf, but sort of perform before him like this: 'You're our dear papa, and we're your beloved children . .' he'd have thawed at once."

"But why?"

"Just by way of precaution . . A Governor is always good for some use, my boy!"

"What are you teaching him, papa?" said Liúba in a low, indignant tone.

"Well, what?"

"To play the lackey."

"You lie, you learned fool! I'm teaching him to be politic, not to play the lackey, I'm teaching him the politics of life . . Now, see here,—take yourself off! Depart from evil and prepare us some refreshments. God be with you!"

Liúba rose quickly, and throwing the towel which she held in her hand over the back of a chair, left the room.

Her father, screwing up his eyes, gazed after her, drummed on the table with his fingers, and remarked:

"I'll teach you, Fomá. I'll instruct you in the real, genuine science and philosophy,—and if you understand it, you will live without making mistakes."

Fomá watched the wrinkles twitching about on the old man's brow, and they seemed to him to resemble the lines in Slavonic print.

"First of all, Fomá, inasmuch as you are living on this earth, you are bound to reflect upon everything which goes on around you. Why? In order that you yourself may not suffer from your lack of common sense, and that you may not injure other people by your stupidity. Now: every mortal affair has two faces, Fomá. One, which is visible to everyone—that's the false one, and the other concealed, which is the real one. You must understand how to discover this last, in order to comprehend the true meaning of an affair. Here, for example, are the night lodging-houses, the work-houses, alms-houses and all the other institutions of that sort. Consider—what are they for?"

"What is there to consider?" said Fomá wearily. "Everyone knows what they are for,—for the poor, the helpless."

"Eh, my boy! Sometimes everyone knows that such and such a man is a rascal, and a swindler, and nevertheless they all call him Iván or Piótr, and address him as 'dear little father,'[1] as though he were an honest man."

"What are you driving at?"

"It all has a bearing on the matter . . So here now, you say that these houses for beggars, for paupers, are, of course, in fulfilment of Christ's commands. All right! But

[1] Equivalent here to: "my dear sir."—*Translator.*

what is a beggar? A beggar is a man who is forced, by fate, to remind us of Christ, he is Christ's brother, he is the bell of the Lord, and rings in life for the purpose of awakening our conscience, of stirring up the satiety of man's flesh . . He stands under the window and sings: 'For Christ's sa-ake!' and by that chant he reminds us of Christ, of His holy command to help our neighbor. But men have so ordered their lives that it is utterly impossible for them to act in accordance with Christ's teaching, and Jesus Christ has become entirely superfluous for us. Not once but, in all probability, a thousand times, we have given Him over to be crucified, but still we cannot banish Him from our lives, so long as His poor brethren sing His Name in the streets, and remind us of Him . . And so now we have hit on the idea of shutting up the beggars in such special buildings, so that they may not roam about the streets and stir up our consciences."

"That's cle-ever!" whispered Fomá in amazement, staring with all his eyes at his god-father.

"Aha!" exclaimed Mayákin, and his little eyes glittered with triumph.

"How was it that my father did not guess the truth?" asked Fomá uneasily.

"Wait! Listen a little longer, it gets worse further on.—So we have hit on the idea of shutting them up in divers houses, and, in order that it may not cost much to maintain them there, we have set them to work, the aged and the crippled . . And now it is unnecessary to bestow alms, and by removing the various sorts of refuse from our streets, we no longer behold their cruel anguish and poverty, and therefore we are able to think that all the people on earth are well-fed, shod, clothed . . So that's what those various houses are for,—they are for concealing the

truth, for banishing Christ from our lives! Is that clear?"

"Ye-es!" said Fomá, befogged by the old man's artful speech.

"And that's not all, either . . we haven't bailed out the puddle to the bottom yet!" exclaimed Mayákin, waving his hand in the air in animated fashion.

The wrinkles on his face began their play; his long, rapacious nose quivered, and his voice quavered with the notes of a certain fervor and emotion.

"Now let us look at this matter from the other side. Who is it that contributes most of all for the benefit of the poor, to all these houses, asylums, philanthropic institutions? The rich people, the merchants, our trading class . . Very good, sir! But who commands and arranges their life? The nobles, the officials, and all other sorts of people, only not our people . . The laws and the newspapers and the sciences come from them—everything is from them. In former days they were landed proprietors, now the land has been jerked out from beneath them,—they have entered the government service.—All right! But who are the most powerful people now-a-days? The merchant is the greatest power in the Empire, because the millions are his! Isn't that so?"

"Yes!" assented Fomá, anxious to hear, as speedily as possible, what his god-father still had to say, and what was already flashing from his eyes.

"Well then, you are to understand this," continued the old man slowly and impressively; "their life has not been arranged by us merchants, and down to the present day, we have no voice in its organization, we can't lay hand to it. Others have arranged that life, and they have bred in it all sorts of scabbiness, in the life of these sluggards, unfortu-

nates, paupers—and if they have bred it, they have defiled it, and they—judging as God would judge—should purify it. But it is we who purify it—we contribute to the wants of the needy, we take care of them. Judge for yourself, pray; why should we sew patches on the rags of another man, if we have not torn them? Why should we set up a house, if we do not live in it, and it is not ours? Wouldn't it be more sensible if we were to step aside, and stand there and watch for a while, how every sort of rottenness multiplies, and strangles the man who is a stranger to us? He can't manage it—he has no means. So he turns to us, and says: 'Pray help, gentlemen!' And we reply to him: 'Please give us room to work in! Include us among the organizers of that life!' And as soon as he does include us, then, with one sweep we must purify life from every uncleanness and divers excesses. Then our Sovereign the Emperor will perceive clearly with his bright eyes who are his faithful servants, and how much sense they have acquired while their hands were idle.—Do you understand?"

"How can I help understanding!" exclaimed Fomá.

When his god-father spoke of officials, he recalled the faces which had been at the dinner, he recalled the audacious secretary, and through his mind darted the thought, that that roly-poly little man certainly did not possess more than a thousand rubles a year, while he, Fomá,—had a million. But that man lived so easily, so freely, in a way which he, Fomá, did not know how to live, in a way which it would put him to confusion to live. This comparison, and his god-father's harangue aroused in him a perfect whirlwind of thoughts, but he succeeded in catching and formulating only one of them.

"Is it a fact, that you toil for nothing but money? But of what use is it, if it does not give power?"

"Aha!" said Mayákin, with a wink.

"Ekh!" ejaculated Fomá, offended. "What did my father think about it? Did you discuss it with him?"

"Yes, for twenty years."

"Well, and what did he say?"

"My argument did not reach him—the deceased had a pretty thick skull . . He wore his heart on his sleeve, but his mind lay deep. H-m ye-es! He,—he blundered,—and it's a great, a very great pity about that money."

"I'm not sorry about the money."

"You ought to try to earn even one tenth of it, and then you might talk . ."

"May I come in?" rang out Liúba's voice at the door.

"Yes—hop right in," replied her father.

"Do you want your refreshments at once?" she asked, as she entered.

"I'm agreeable."

She went to the sideboard and rattled the dishes. Yákoff Tarásovitch watched her, twisted his lips about, and suddenly clapping Fomá on the knee with his hand he said to him:

"So then, god-son! Investigate . ."

Fomá answered him by a smile, and thought to himself:

"He's clever—cleverer than my father was."

And immediately he answered himself, but in what seemed to be another voice:

"Cleverer but worse."

V

The double tie to Mayákin kept getting a stronger clutch on Fomá as time went on: as he listened to his god-father's remarks with attention and eager curiosity, he was conscious that every meeting with him augmented his unpleasant feeling toward the old man. At times, Yákoff Tarásovitch aroused in his god-son a feeling akin to terror, at times even, physical repulsion. The latter generally made its appearance in Fomá when the old man was pleased with something and laughed. The old man's wrinkles shook with laughter, altering the expression of his face every second; his thin, dry lips twitched, stretched and disclosed black stumps of teeth, and his red beard seemed fairly afire. The sound of his laughter resembled the squeak of rusty hinges, and the old man himself a sportive lizard. Unable to conceal his feelings, Fomá expressed them to Mayákin frequently and with extreme harshness, both by words and gestures, but the old man did not seem to notice this, and, keeping an eye constantly on his god-son, guided his every step. He hardly went to his little shop at all, being completely engrossed in young Gordyéeff's steamer affairs, and leaving Fomá much leisure time. Thanks to Mayákin's importance in the town and his extensive acquaintance on the Vólga, the business went on brilliantly, but Mayákin's zealous relations to the business strengthened Fomá's conviction that his god-father was firmly resolved to marry him to Liúba, and this still further repelled him from the old man.

He liked Liúba, and yet she seemed suspicious and dangerous for him. She did not marry, and his god-father said nothing on that point, gave no evening parties, invited none of the young men to his house, and did not allow Liúba to go out anywhere. All her girl friends were already married . . . Fomá was astonished at her speeches, and listened to them as eagerly as to the harangues of her father; but when she began to talk lovingly and sorrowfully about Tarás, it seemed to him that under that name she was concealing some other man, perhaps that same Ezhóff, who, from what she said, had been compelled, for some reason, to leave the university and depart from Moscow. There was a great deal of simplicity and kindliness about her, which pleased Fomá, and by her remarks she often evoked his pity for her: it seemed to him that she was not living but raving with her eyes wide open.

His outburst at his father's funeral-feast became noised about among the merchant class, and created for him an unflattering reputation. When he was on 'Change, he observed that everyone looked at him with a sneer, disapprovingly, and that they talked with him in a rather peculiar way. Once, even, he heard behind him the low but scornful exclamation:

"The paltry little stuck-up fool! The milk-sop."

He felt that it was said about him, but he did not turn round, did not look to see who had hurled these words at him. The rich men, who, at first, had inspired him with shyness in their presence, lost in his eyes the charm of their wealth and their cleverness. More than once they had wrested from his grasp one profitable contract or another; he perceived clearly that they would do the same in the future, and they all appeared to him equally greedy for money, always ready to cheat one another. When he com-

municated his observations to his god-father, the old man said:

"And what of that? Trade is exactly like war . . a game of chance. They are fighting for their pocket-books, and the soul is in the pocket-book."

"I don't like it," declared Fomá.

"I don't like everything either,—there's a great deal that is false. But it's utterly impossible to walk perfectly straight in a matter of business,—one must be politic! So, my boy, when you approach a man, hold honey in your left hand, and in your right—a knife! Every man wants to purchase a five-kopék piece for two kopéks."

"Well—that's not very nice," said Fomá meditatively.

"It will be nicer later on. When you get the upper hand, it's nice enough. Life, my dear Fomá, is very simply regulated: Bite everybody, or lie in the mud."

The old man smiled, and the snags of teeth in his mouth aroused in Fomá the keen thought:

"Evidently, you have bitten a great many."

"In one word—it's war!" repeated the old man.

"Is it an actual fact?" asked Fomá, gazing searchingly at Mayákin.

"What do you mean by 'an actual fact?'"

"There's nothing better? That's all there is to it?"

"What else should there be? Everyone lives for himself. Everyone wishes the best for himself . . . And what is that best? To get ahead of people, to stand higher than they do. Everyone is striving to attain to the highest place in life—one in one way, another in another way—but all, of necessity, desire that they may be visible from a distance, like the belfries. That's what man is destined to—elevation. Even in the Book of Job this is expressed: 'A man is born to trouble, like the sparks, that he may fly up-

ward.' Just look: the little brats in their games always want to excel one another. And every game has its highest point, which makes it absorbing . . Do you understand?"

"I do understand that!" said Fomá, courageously and with conviction.

"You must feel it also . . By understanding alone you'll never jump up anywhere, and you must long, and long fervently, that the mountain should be a hillock, the ocean a puddle for you! Eh! When I was your age, I used to treat life as a jest! But you'll catch on all right. However, good fruit never ripens fast."

The old man's monotonous harangues speedily effected the object for which they were intended; Fomá heeded them, and explained to himself the aim of life. He kept repeating to himself that he must be better than other men, and vanity, aroused by the old man, ate deeply into his heart. It ate in, but did not fill it, for Fomá's relations to Madame Medýnsky assumed the character which they were bound to assume. He was attracted to her, he was always wishing to see her, but in her presence he became shy, clumsy, stupid, knew it, and suffered because of it. He was frequently at her house, but it was difficult to find her at home alone: the scented dandies were always hovering about her, like flies over a lump of sugar. They talked to her in French, they sang, they laughed, but he remained silent, and stared at them, full of wrath and envy. Crossing his legs, he seated himself in some corner of her gaily furnished drawing-room, where it was dreadfully difficult to walk about, without coming into contact with and overturning something,—and there he sat, and gloomily made his observations.

She flitted noiselessly about before him, over the soft rugs, throwing him caressing glances and smiles, her adorers

wound in and out after her, and all of them avoided, with the agility of serpents, the divers little tables, the chairs, screens, stands for flowers—a whole shopful of beautiful and fragile articles strewn over the room with a carelessness which was equally dangerous for them and for Fomá. When he walked, the rugs did not deaden the sound of his footsteps, and all those things caught in his frock-coat, reeled, and fell. Near the piano stood a bronze sailor, with arm uplifted to cast a life-preserver, and on the life-preserver hung ropes of wire, which were always pulling Fomá's hair. All this evoked the laughter of Sófya Pávlovna and her adorers, but cost Fomá very dear, driving him now into a fever, again into a chill.

But he was no more at his ease when he was alone with her. Greeting him with a caressing smile, she would seat herself with him in one of the cosy nooks of the drawing-room, and she generally began the conversation by complaining to him about everybody:

"You cannot believe how glad I am to see you!"

Curving herself like a cat, she would gaze into his eyes with her dark glance, in which something greedy now flashed up.

"I'm so fond of talking with you," she chanted, drawling out her words musically.—"I'm tired of all those men . . . they're so wearisome, ordinary, threadbare. But you are so fresh, and genuine. Surely, you don't like them either?"

"I can't endure them!" replied Fomá firmly.

"And me?" she asked softly.

Fomá turned his eyes aside and said, with a sigh:

"How many times have you asked that?"

"You find it difficult to say?"

"No—but why should I?"

"I must know."

"You are playing with me," said Fomá gloomily.

But she opened her eyes wide, and, in a tone of the most profound amazement, inquired:

"How am I playing with you? What does the word mean?"

And her face was so angelic that he could not do otherwise than believe her.

"I love you—I love you! Is it possible not to love you?" he said ardently, and then instantly added, sadly, in a lower tone: "But, of course, you do not want that."

"There, you have said it!" sighed Madame Medýnsky, in a satisfied way, and moved away from him.

"It is always extremely agreeable to me to hear how you say that—in such a youthful, whole-hearted way. . Would you like to kiss my hand?"

Silently he grasped her slender, white hand, and, bending cautiously over it, he kissed it long and fervently. She tore her hand away, smiling, gracious, but not in the least agitated by his ardor. Thoughtfully, and with that gleam in her eyes which disconcerted Fomá, she scrutinized him, as though he were something rare and very curious, and said:

"How much health, strength, and freshness of soul you have. . Do you know, you merchants are a tribe which has not had much experience, as yet, a tribe with original traditions, with vast energy of soul and body. Take yourself, for example; you are a precious stone, and if you were cut . . . Oh!"

When she said: "you have," "in your way," "after the merchant fashion," it seemed to Fomá that, by these words, she repulsed him from her. It was both melancholy and offensive. He made no reply, but gazed at her

tiny figure, which was always garbed in a rather peculiarly beautiful manner, was always as fragrant as a flower, and delicate as that of a young girl. At times there flashed up within him a wild, fierce desire to seize her and kiss her. But her beauty, and the fragility of her slender and willowy body, aroused in him the fear of breaking or crippling her, while her calm, caressing voice, and her clear glance—which yet seemed to be on guard—chilled his impetuosity; it seemed to him that she was looking straight into his soul, and understood all his thoughts. But these outbursts of feeling were rare, and, in general, the young man bore himself toward Madame Medýnsky with adoration, admired everything about her—her beauty, her remarks, her clothing. And, side by side with this adoration, there always existed within him the torturingly-acute consciousness of his remoteness from her, of her superiority over him.

These relations were promptly established between them; in the course of two or three encounters, Madame Medýnsky completely captivated the young man, and began slowly to torture him. It must have pleased her to exercise power over the healthy, robust young fellow; it pleased her to arouse and quell the animal in him by her voice and glance alone, and she enjoyed playing with him, confident of the strength of her influence. He quitted her half ill with excitement, and bore away with him offence at her, and wrath at himself, and many burdensome sensations which intoxicated him. But, within two days, he presented himself for more torture. One day he timidly asked her:

"Sófya Pávlovna!—have you ever had any children?"

"No."

"I knew it!" exclaimed Fomá joyfully.

She gazed at him with the eyes of a very young and ingenuous girl and said:

"How did you know it? And why do you wish to know whether I have had any children?"

Fomá turned scarlet, bent his head, and began to say to her dully, and exactly as though he were forcing the words out of the ground, and every word weighed forty pounds:

"You see—if a woman who—that is to say—has had a child, her eyes are not so utterly . . ."

"Ye-es? So what?"

"Shameless!" blurted out Fomá.

Madame Medýnsky laughed her silvery laugh, and Fomá, gazing at her, laughed also.

"Forgive me!" he said, at last. "Perhaps I have not expressed myself well, properly. ."

"Oh, no, no! you cannot say anything improper. . . You are a pure, darling little boy. So my eyes are shameless?"

"Your eyes are—those of an angel!" declared Fomá triumphantly, regarding her with a beaming glance.

But she gazed at him as she had not gazed up to that time—with the look of the woman-mother, with the plaintive glance of love, mingled with alarm for the beloved object.

"Go away, my dear one. . I am weary and wish to rest," she said to him, rising and not looking at him.

He submissively took his departure.

For a while after this occurrence she treated him more severely and honorably, as though pitying him, but later on, their relations assumed the ancient form of a cat's play with a mouse.

Fomá's relations to Madame Medýnsky could not be

concealed from his god-father, and one day the old man, with a spiteful expression of countenance, said to him:

"Fomá, you'd better feel of your head pretty often, lest you lose it by accident."

"What do you mean by that?" inquired Fomá.

"I refer to Sónka. . . You go to see her very often indeed."

"What's that to you?" said Fomá rudely. "And what business have you to call her Sónka?"

"It's nothing to me—I shall lose nothing if they skin you. And as for calling her Sónka—everybody knows about that. . . And that she's fond of pulling the chestnuts out of the fire with other people's hands—everybody knows also."

"She's clever!" declared Fomá firmly, frowning and hiding his hands in his pockets. . "Highly educated."

"She is clever—that's true! For instance, how cleverly she organized that last evening entertainment: the proceeds were two thousand four hundred rubles—and the expenses were one thousand nine hundred. And there should be no expenses at all . . because everything is done for her and given to her gratis. . She's highly educated. . She will educate you, especially the lazy dogs who hang round her. ."

"They're not lazy dogs—but clever fellows, too!" retorted Fomá angrily, contradicting himself. . "And I'm learning from them. . What am I good for? Nothing—neither to pipe nor to dance. . What was I taught? But there they talk of everything, and each person has his say. Don't you prevent my making a man of myself."

"Phe-ew! Ho-ow you have learned to talk! It's just like hail on the roof . . it's fierce! Well, all right—make a man of yourself—only 'twould be less dangerous

to go to the public-house to accomplish it; there the men are, at any rate, better than Sófya's fellows. . And you, my lad, would do well to learn to discriminate between people, to know what each one is like. For example, Sófya. . What does she represent? An insect for the adornment of Nature—nothing else!"

Indignant to the bottom of his soul, Fomá clenched his teeth and quitted Mayákin, with his hands thrust still deeper into his pockets. But it was not long before the old man again brought up the subject of Madame Medýnsky. They were returning from the overflowed tract, after inspecting some steamers, and as they sat in the huge, comfortable sledge, they were chatting in a friendly and animated way about business matters. This was in the month of March: water creaked under the runners of their sledge, the snow was already covered with a dirty film, and the sun shone cheerfully and warmly in the clear sky.

"When you get back, you'll be going to your fine lady the very first thing?" inquired Mayákin unexpectedly, breaking off their business conversation.

"I shall," replied Fomá curtly and with displeasure.

"Mm . . Tell me, do you often make gifts to her?" asked Mayákin simply, and in a rather confidential way.

"What gifts? Why?" asked Fomá in surprise.

"You don't make her gifts? The idea. . Do you mean to say that she lives with you simply for love?"

Fomá blazed up in wrath and shame, turned sharply on the old man and said reproachfully:

"Eh! You're an old man,—but it's shameful to listen to you! Come now.—Would she—do such a thing?"

Mayákin smacked his lips, and drawled, in a whining tone:

"What a blo-ockhead you are! What a foo-ol!" and, suddenly waxing spiteful, he spat. "Fie on you! Every sort of animal has drunk from the jug, the dregs remain, but the fool has set up the dirty pot as a little goddess for himself . . . The de-evil! Do you go to her, and say, straight out: 'I want to be your lover—I'm young, don't charge much.'"

"God-father!" said Fomá, surlily and menacingly . . "I cannot listen to this . . If it were anyone else . ."

"But who else except myself will warn you? Ah, good heavens!" squealed Mayákin, clasping his hands. "Has she been leading you by the nose all winter? Well, what a nose! Ah, such a nose! O, the wretched creature!"

The old man was disturbed; vexation, anger, even tears were audible in his voice. Fomá had never seen him like that, and involuntarily remained silent, staring at him.

"She will certainly ruin you! Oh Lord!"

Mayákin's eyes winked more rapidly, his lips quivered, and in coarse, cynical words he began to speak about Madame Medýnsky, irritably, with a wrathful squeak. Fomá felt that the old man was telling the truth. He found it difficult to breathe, and his mouth tasted dry and bitter.

"Enough, papa, pray stop . . ." he entreated softly and sadly, turning away from Mayákin.

"Eh, you'd better get married as quickly as possible!" cried the old man in alarm.

"For Christ's sake, don't say that . ." implored Fomá, in a dull voice.

Mayákin glanced at his god-son, and held his peace. Fomá's face seemed to have grown haggard and pale, and there was much heavy and bitter amazement expressed on his half-opened lips, and in his mournful glance.—On the

right and the left of the road lay meadows, covered with tufts of their winter garments. Rooks were hopping eagerly about on the black spots where the snow had melted. The water seeped under the sledge-runners, the dirty snow flew from under the hoofs of the horses.

"Well, and man is stupid in his youth!" exclaimed Mayákin in a low tone. Fomá did not look at him. "The stump of a tree stands in front of him—and he sees it as the maw of a wild beast,—and frightens himself with it, o—ho—ho!"

"Speak straight out," said Fomá surlily.

"What is there to say? The matter is plain; maidens are cream, married women are milk; the married women are close at hand, the maidens are far away—therefore, go to Sónka if you can't get along without it,—and tell her plainly,—thus and so . . . The little idiot! if she's a sinner, you know, that means that she will be the more easily attainable to you. What are you sulking about? What are you flaring up about?"

"You don't understand," said Fomá softly.

"What is it I don't understand? I understand everything!"

"The heart—that a man has a heart," sighed the young man.

Mayákin puckered up his eyes and remarked:

"That means, that he has no brain."

VI

Fома drove into town, a prey to melancholy and revengeful wrath. A passionate desire boiled within him to insult Madame Medýnsky, to revile her. With his teeth tightly set together, and his hands thrust deep in his pockets, he paced up and down the empty rooms of his house for several hours in succession, frowning harshly, and with his chest well thrust forward. His breast was too narrow for his heart, which was full of anger. He set his feet down heavily and in measured tread on the floor, as though he were fettering his wrath.

"The vile creature—had put on the guise of an angel! —Like a living being, Pelagáya rose to his memory, and he whispered maliciously and bitterly:

"She was an abandoned woman, but she was better!— She made no pretence.—She laid bare soul and body at once."

From time to time, hope suggested to him, in a timid voice:

"Perhaps all those things about her are lies."

But he recalled the eager conviction and power of his god-father's remarks, and that thought perished. He set his teeth more firmly, and thrust out his chest still more. Evil thoughts were piercing at his heart like splinters, and his heart was gnawed with the sharp pain of them.

Mayákin, by casting down Madame Medýnsky into the mud, had thereby rendered her more accessible to his godson, and Fomá speedily comprehended this. Several days

passed in the business cares which spring brought with it, and Fomá's agitated feelings quieted down. Sadness over the loss of a man dulled his wrath against the woman, but the thought of the woman's accessibility increased her attraction for him. And imperceptibly to himself, he suddenly understood this, and decided that he must go to Sófya Pávlovna and say to her simply what he wanted of her,—and that was all! He even experienced a certain joy at this decision, and went boldly to Madame Medýnsky, meditating on the way only as to the best and most adroit method of saying to her what was necessary.

Madame Medýnsky's servants were accustomed to his visits, and to his question: "Was Madame at home?" the maid said:

"Please go into the drawing-room,—she is alone there."

He quailed a little . . . but catching sight in the mirror of his stately form, handsomely clad in a frock-coat, and his swarthy face framed in a small downy black beard, a serious face, with large, dark eyes,—he elevated his shoulders, and strode through the hall with assurance.

The sounds of a stringed instrument floated to meet him —such strange sounds: they seemed to be laughing with a soft, sorrowful laugh, and wailing about something, and touched the heart so tenderly, as though imploring attention, yet despairing of receiving it.—Fomá was not fond of listening to music,—it always made him sad. Even when the "machine" at the restaurant began to play something mournful, he felt a melancholy languor in his breast, and occasionally begged that the "machine" might be stopped, or went away as far as possible from it, feeling that he could not listen with composure to those speeches without words, but full of tears and wails. Now, also, he paused involuntarily, on the threshold of the drawing-room.

The door was screened by long strings of motley-hued beads, strung in such a manner that they formed a fantastic pattern of some sort of plants; the strings waved gently, and the pale shadows of flowers seemed to flutter through the air. This transparent wall did not conceal the interior of the drawing-room from Fomá's eyes. Madame Medýnsky, seated on a couch in her favorite corner, was playing on a mandolin. A huge Japanese umbrella, fastened to the wall, formed a canopy, with the medley of its tints over the tiny woman dressed in a dark gown; a tall bronze lamp, under a red shade, flooded her with the light of the sunset. The tender sounds of the delicate strings rang out mournfully in the narrow room, filled with soft, fragrant gloom. And now the woman drops the mandolin on her knees, and continuing to draw her fingers across the strings, begins to gaze intently at something in front of her. Fomá sighed.

The soft sound of the music floated around Madame Medýnsky, and her face kept changing and changing, as though shadows were cast upon it from somewhere or other; they fell and melted with the gleam in her eyes.

Fomá gazed at her, and perceived that alone with herself she was not as handsome as when others were present,—her face was older, more serious now,—her eyes did not have that expression of endearment and mildness, they looked bored and fatigued. And her pose was weary, as though the woman wished to rise, and could not. Fomá noticed that the object with which he had come to her was being replaced in his heart by another feeling. He scraped his foot on the floor, and coughed.

"Who's there?" asked the woman, in trembling alarm.

"It is I," said Fomá, putting aside the strings of beads with his hand.

"Ah! But how quietly you came . . I'm glad to see you . . Sit down! Why haven't you been for such a long while?"

Reaching out one hand to him, with the other she pointed to a small chair beside her, and her eyes smiled gleefully.

"I went to the winter-harbor, to inspect my steamers," said Fomá, with exaggerated ease of manner, pushing his chair closer to the couch.

"Is there much snow in the fields still?"

"Plenty . . But it's melting fast. There is water everywhere on the roads."

He looked at her and smiled. Madame Medýnsky must have noticed the freedom of his behavior, and something new in his smile,—she adjusted her gown, and moved away from him. Their eyes met—and Madame Medýnsky dropped her head.

"It is melting!" she said thoughtfully, stroking the ring on her little finger.

"Ye-es . . there are rivulets everywhere," remarked Fomá, scrutinizing his boots.

"That's good. Spring is coming."

"It will soon be here now."

"Spring is coming," repeated Madame Medýnsky in a low tone, and seemed to be listening to the sound of her own words.

"People will begin to fall in love," said Fomá, laughing, and began to rub his hands, for some reason or other.

"Are you getting ready to do it?" inquired Madame Medýnsky drily.

"I'm all right—I was ready long ago—I'm in love for life."

And Fomá moved toward the woman, smiling broadly and confusedly.

She darted a swift glance at him, and again began to play, staring at the strings, and saying reflectively:

"Spring . . . What a good thing it is that you are only just beginning to live. Your heart is full of strength —and there is nothing dark in it."

"Sófya Pávlovna!" exclaimed Fomá softly.

She stopped him with a caressing gesture.

"Wait, my dear!—Today I can tell you—something nice . . You know—a man who has seen much of life has minutes when, as he gazes into his own heart, he suddenly finds there—something he had forgotten long before . . . it has been lying somewhere, deep down, at the bottom of his heart, for years—but has not lost its fragrance of youth, and when his memory touches it—then a breath of spring is wafted over the man,—a breath of the quickening freshness of the morning of his day.—This is well—though it is very sad."

The strings quivered and wept under her fingers, and it seemed to Fomá that their sounds and the woman's soft voice were titillating his heart tenderly and caressingly. But, still firm in his resolve, he listened to her words, and not understanding their meaning, he thought:

"Talk away! I shall not believe any of your speeches now!"

This thought irritated him. And he felt sorry that he could not listen to her remarks as attentively and as confidingly as he had been wont to do.

"You are thinking about what one should do with life?" asked the woman.

"Sometimes one thinks about it, and then again, one forgets. There's no time!" said Fomá, and burst out laughing.—"And what's the good of thinking about it? Of course—one sees how people live,—well, as a matter of course, one is bound to imitate them."

"Ah, don't do that! Have pity on yourself. You are such a—splendid fellow! There is something peculiar about you—what is it? I do not know! But one can feel it. And it strikes me that you will find it terribly difficult to live.—I am convinced that you will not walk in the ordinary path of people of your class . . . no! To you a life cannot be agreeable that is entirely consecrated to gain, to the pursuit of the ruble—to that trade—oh, no! I know that you long for something different—do you not?"

She spoke hastily, with a tremor in her eyes. Fomá thought, as he gazed at her:

"What's she driving at?"

And he replied to her slowly:

"Perhaps I may want that—perhaps I do want it."

Moving nearer to him, she gazed up into his face, and said, persuasively:

"Listen! Do not live like all the rest! Arrange your own life in some other way. You are strong, young,—you are good!"

"And if I am good, then things ought to go well with me!" cried Fomá, conscious that emotion was gaining the mastery over him, and that his heart was beginning to beat anxiously.

"Ah, that does not happen so! And the good always have a worse time on the earth than the bad!" said Madame Medýnsky sadly.

And again the trembling notes of the music leaped out from beneath her fingers. Fomá felt, that if he did not begin on the instant to say to her what he had to say, he would never say anything to her later on.

"Bless, O Lord!" he ejaculated mentally, and, with lowered voice, with a strain upon his chest, he began:

"Sófya Pávlovna! Make an end of it! I must speak.

This is what I came here to say to you: Enough of this! You must deal with me in a straightforward manner, openly.—You allured me to yourself in the beginning, and now you are fencing me off from you, in some way or other . . I don't understand what you say—my wits are dull—but I certainly am conscious that you wish to hide yourself from me—for I see—do you understand with what object I have come to you?"

His eyes began to flame, and with every word his voice grew louder, more ardent. Her whole body swayed forward, and she said, in alarm:

"Oh, cease . ."

"I will not—I will speak!"

"I know what you wish to say."

"You don't know all!" said Fomá menacingly, rising to his feet.—"But I know all about you!"

"Yes? So much the better for me," remarked Madame Medýnsky calmly.

She, also, rose from her couch, as though with the intention of going away, but after pausing for a couple of seconds, she sank down again in her former place. Her face was grave, her lips were tightly compressed, but she dropped her eyes, and Fomá could not see their expression. He had imagined that when he should say to her: "I know all about you!" she would be frightened, she would feel ashamed, and disconcerted, she would ask his pardon for having played with him. Then he would clasp her in a close embrace, and forgive her. But it did not turn out thus; he was disconcerted in the presence of her composure; he stared at her, he sought for words wherewith to resume his harangue, and found them not.

"So much the better," she repeated drily and firmly.—"So you have learned all—yes? And, of course, you have

condemned me—that was the proper thing to do.—I understand, I am guilty in your eyes. But—no, I cannot justify myself."

She ceased speaking, and, all at once, raising her hands with a nervous gesture, she clasped her head,—and began to arrange her hair.

Fomá emitted a deep sigh. Madame Medýnsky's words had slain some hope within him,—a hope of whose presence in his heart he only became conscious now that it was slain. And shaking his head, he said, with bitter reproach:

"I used to gaze at you and think: 'How beautiful she is—how good—a perfect dove!' And now, you yourself say that you are guilty, alas!"

The young fellow's voice broke. But the woman began to laugh softly.

"What a splendid, ridiculous fellow you are!—And what a pity that you cannot understand—all this!"

The young fellow looked at her, feeling himself disarmed by her caressing words and mournful smile. That hard, harsh feeling which he cherished in his breast against her, melted within him at the warm glow of her eyes. The woman now seemed to him as small and defenceless as a child. She said something, in an affectionate voice, as though making some entreaty, smiling all the while, but he did not heed her words.

"I came to you," he began, interrupting her, "without pity . .—I said to myself—'I'll tell her!' But I have told you nothing—I don't want to. My courage is gone—you breathe upon me in such a way . . . Eh, I have seen you to no purpose! What are you to me? Evidently, I must go away."

"Wait, my dear, do not go!" said the woman hastily, stretching out her hand to him . .—"Why are you so—

surly? Do not be angry with me! What am I to you? You need a woman friend, of a different sort, a simple, healthy-souled creature, like yourself. She ought to be merry, lively. As for me, I am already an old woman. I'm always sad—I find life so empty and tiresome—so empty! Do you know—when a man has become accustomed to living merrily, and cannot rejoice—he is in a bad way! He wishes to live gaily, he wishes to laugh—and it is not he who laughs, but life which laughs at him. And people—Hearken to me! I counsel you like a mother, I beg and implore you—listen to nothing but your own heart! Live as it dictates. People know nothing, can say nothing true—do not listen to them!"

In her effort to speak as simply and intelligibly as possible, she grew agitated, and the words of her discourse flowed one after the other, hastily, incoherently. All the while, a pitiful smile played upon her lips, and her face was not pretty.

"Life is very stern—it demands that all men should submit themselves to its claims, and only the very strong ones can oppose it with impunity. And can they? Oh, if you only knew how difficult it is to live.—A man gets to the point where he begins to be afraid of himself . . he divides himself into judge and criminal, and condemns himself, and seeks to justify himself to himself—and he is ready, day and night, to be with a man he despises, who is repulsive to him,—only for the sake of not being alone with himself!"

Fomá raised his head, and said with incredulity and amazement:

"I don't understand in the least what sort of a man I am. And Liubóff, also says—."

"What Liubóff? What does she say?"

"My sister.—She says the same,—she's forever complaining of life."

"Oh, she is young yet! And it is a great happiness that she is already talking of that."

"A happi-ness!" drawled Fomá sneeringly. "A nice kind of happiness, truly, which makes one groan and complain."

"Do you heed the complaints—there is always much wisdom in people's complaints. Oh, there is more wisdom in them than in all else. Heed them—they will teach you to find your path."

Fomá listened to the persuasive sounds of the woman's voice, and glanced about him, with surprise in his soul. He had long been familiar with everything there, but today everything, somehow, looked new: a mass of trifles filled the room, all the walls were covered with pictures, brackets; beautiful and striking things met the eye on every hand. The reddish gleam of the lamp induced melancholy. Twilight lay over everything; here and there, the gilding of a frame, or white spots of porcelain shone dully forth from it. Heavy stuffs hung motionless over the doors. All this embarrassed, oppressed Fomá, and he felt that he was beginning to go astray. He felt sorry for the woman. But she irritated him.

"You hear how I am talking to you? I would like to be your mother, your sister. No one has ever evoked in me such a warm, tender feeling, as to a relation, as you have. But you—look at me so—in such an unfriendly way. Do you believe me? Yes? No?"

He stared at her, and said, with a sigh:

"Really, I don't know.—I did believe . ."

"But now?" she asked quickly.

"But now—it is better that I should go away! I under-

stand nothing—but I would like to understand. And I don't understand myself. I came to you, and I knew what I had to say . . But the result has been a regular snarl. You brought me up on the nursing-bottle, you have set me on edge . . And now you say: 'I will be a mother to you!' Go now—leave me alone!"

"Understand me—I am sorry for you!" exclaimed the woman softly.

Fomá's irritation against her kept increasing, and, in proportion as he continued to speak, his remarks became absurd.—And as he talked, he incessantly shook his shoulders, as though he were rending something which hampered him.

"Sorry? Why?! I don't want that. Eh, I can't say what I mean! I'm in a bad plight, dumb animal that I am. But I might have told you!—You have not treated me well—and I keep thinking—why did you allure a man so? Am I your plaything?"

"All I wanted was to see you near me," said the woman simply, in a guilty voice.

He did not hear these words.

"And when it came to the point,—you became frightened, and barred yourself off from me. You began to repent—ha! Life is an evil! And why are you always complaining about life? What life? Man is life, and there is no life except man. But you have invented some sort of a monster,—and you have done it to divert people's eyes, to justify yourself. You make mischief, and get mixed up in various fancies and nonsense,—and then moan! 'Akh, life! Okh, life!' And haven't you made it for yourself? And by sheltering yourself under complaints, you confuse others.—Well, you have strayed from the road, but why should I do the same? Is it spite in you that makes you say: 'I'm in a bad fix, so I want you to be in a bad fix,

too,—there now: I'll sprinkle your heart with my poisonous tears!' Is that it? Oh, you woman! God gave you angelic beauty, but where is your heart?"

He trembled all over, as he stood before her, and measured her from head to foot with his reproachful gaze. Now the words came forth freely from his breast, he talked not loudly but powerfully, and he found it pleasant to talk. The woman, raising her head, stared up into his face with widely-opened eyes. Her lips quivered, and sharp little wrinkles made their appearance at the corners of them.

"A handsome man, and he ought to live well . . But they say of you, yonder . ."

Fomá's voice broke, and with a wave of the hand he concluded, in a dull tone:

"Farewell!"

"Farewell!" said Madame Medýnsky softly.

He did not give her his hand, but wheeling sharply round, he walked away from her. But at the door leading into the hall, he felt that he pitied her, and cast a glance at her over his shoulder. She was standing there, in the corner, alone, and her arms hung motionless down her sides, and her head was bent.

He comprehended that he could not go like that, grew confused, and said softly, but without remorse:

"Perhaps I have said something which offends you—forgive me! But, you see, I love you,"—and he sighed heavily. But the woman broke out into soft but singular laughter.

"No, you have not offended me . . Go, and God be with you."

"Well then, farewell!" repeated Fomá, still more softly.

"Yes,—" replied the woman, in the same soft way.

Fomá thrust aside with his hand the strings of beads;

they swung, jingled, and swept his cheeks. He shuddered at that cold touch and went away, bearing in his breast a confused, oppressive feeling, and the heart within him beat as though a soft but strong net had been cast over it.

It was already night, the moon was shining, and the frost had covered the pools with crusts of dull silvery hue. Fomá walked along the sidewalk, breaking these crusts, with his cane, and they crunched crisply. The shadows of the houses lay across the road in black squares, and those of the trees, in fantastic patterns. And some of them resembled slender hands, which were clutching helplessly at the earth.

"What is she doing now?" thought Fomá, picturing to himself the lonely woman, in the corner of the small room, in the midst of the reddish gloom.

"It is better for me to forget her," he decided. But it was impossible to forget, and she stood before him, evoking in him now sharp pity, now irritation and even wrath. But her image was as clear, and his thoughts of her were as burdensome, as though he bore this woman with him, in his breast.—A four-wheeled drozhky drove toward him, filling the nocturnal silence with the clatter of wheels on the stones, and their squeaking on the ice. When it drove in the strip of moonlight, the noise of its movement became louder and more lively, but in the darkness it sounded heavièr and duller. The driver and passenger were rocking and jolting about in it; for some reason, they were both bending forward, and constituted, together with the horse, one large, black mass. The street was mottled with patches of light and shadow, but at a distance the gloom was as intense as though a wall, rising from earth to heaven, barred off the street. For some reason or other, it struck Fomá that these persons did not know where they were driving.—Neither did he know whither he was going. His

house occurred to his mind, with its six great rooms, in which he dwelt alone. Aunt Anfísa had betaken herself to a convent, and perhaps she would not return thence, but would die there . . At home, there was Iván, the deaf old yard-porter, Sekletáya, an aged spinster, who was cook and maid, and a shaggy black dog, with a snout as blunt as that of a sheat-fish. And the dog was old also.

"So be it, I really ought to marry," thought Fomá, sighing.

But he felt awkward and very ridiculous at the idea of how easy it was for him to marry. He might say to his god-father, the very next day, that he was to woo a bride, and before the month was out, a woman would be living there in the house with him. And she would be close to him day and night. He would say to her: "Let's go for a walk!" and she would go. He would say: "Let's go to bed!" and again she would go. If she took a fancy to kiss him, she would do so, whether he liked it or not. But if he were to say to her, "I don't want to, go away!" she would feel insulted. What was he to talk to her about? And what would she find to say to him? He meditated, and pictured to himself the young ladies of his acquaintance, the daughters of merchants. Several of them were extremely pretty, and he knew that any one of them would gladly marry him. But not one of them did he care to see beside him as his wife. Then he recalled Liúba Mayákin. She would certainly be the first to speak, to express herself in some words that were strange and obscure to him. For some reason or other, it seemed to him that all her words were strange to him, and that she did not say what a young girl of her age, appearance and birth ought to say.

Then his thoughts came to a halt over Liubóff's complaints. He began to walk more slowly, struck with the

fact, that all the people whom he knew in the least intimately, or with whom he conversed at all, always talked to him about life. His father, and his aunt, his god-father, Liubóff, Sófya Pávlovna,—all of them were either teaching him to understand life, or complaining about it. He recalled the words concerning fate, uttered by the old man on the steamer, and many other remarks regarding life, reproaches of it, and bitter complaints against it, which he had heard cursorily from various people.

"What does this mean?" he said to himself, "what is life, if not people? But people are always talking as though it were not they, but something else besides people, and as though it prevented their living. Perhaps it is the devil?"

An uncanny sensation of fear seized upon the young fellow; he shuddered, and cast a swift glance about him. The street was empty and silent; the dark windows of the houses gazed out dully on the nocturnal gloom, and along the walls, along the fences, Fomá's shadow followed him.

"Cabby!" he shouted loudly, hastening his steps. The shadow gave a start, and crawled after him, speechless and black. It seemed to Fomá as though a chill breath were blowing on him from behind, and that something huge, invisible but dreadful, were overtaking him. In his terror, he almost ran to meet a drozhky which made its appearance out of the darkness, from somewhere or other, and when he took his seat in the carriage, he could not refrain from looking behind him, although he wished to do so.

VII

About a week had elapsed since his conversation with Madame Medýnsky. By day and by night her image stood importunately before Fomá, breeding in his heart a gnawing sensation of anguish. He wanted to go to her, and he pined for her so, that his very bones ached with the desire of his heart to be once more by her side. But he maintained a surly silence, and would not yield to the desire, zealously occupying himself with business affairs, and stirring up within himself wrath against the woman. He felt, that if he were to go to her, he would no longer behold her the same as when he had quitted her, some change must have taken place in her, after that interview with him, and she would no longer greet him so caressingly as before, she would not smile upon him with the clear smile which had awakened in him certain special ideas and hopes. Fearing that this would not be so, but that something else was bound to be, he still restrained himself and tormented himself.

Work, and longing for the woman did not prevent his thinking about life, also. He did not reason about this problem, which had already aroused in his heart an uneasy sensation; he did not know how to reason, but he began to lend an attentive ear to everything which people said about life, and to endeavor to remember these remarks. They explained nothing to him, but only augmented his astonishment and begot in him a suspicious feeling toward them. They were clever, acute and wise—he saw that; in business

transactions with them, he found it necessary to be always on his guard; he was already aware that, on important occasions, not one of them would utter what he thought. And attentively observing them, he became conscious that their sighs and complaints against life aroused suspicion in him. Silently, with a distrustful glance, he watched them all, and a fine wrinkle began to intersect his brow.

One morning, on 'Change, his god-father said to him:

"Ananias has arrived.—He invites you. Do you go to him one of these evenings, and see that you keep a strict watch on your tongue . . Ananias will set it to swinging, to make you ring about business affairs. He's a cunning old devil . . A fox from hell . . he'll roll his eyes up to heaven, and thrust his paw into your bosom, and drag out your purse . . Be on your guard."

"Do we owe him anything?" asked Fomá.

"Certainly! The barge isn't paid for . . and we took a hundred and fifty five-fathom beams from him not long ago . . . If he demands it all, cash down, don't give it to him. A ruble is a sticky thing; the more it turns about in your hand, the greater will be the number of kopéks which will adhere to it . . . A ruble is like a good pigeon,—it flies into the air, and the first you know, it brings a whole flock back to the dovecote."

"But how can I help giving it to him, if he demands it?"

"Let him weep and implore,—and do you roar, but don't give."

"I'll go by and by," said Fomá.

Ananíi Sávvitch Shtchúroff was a large dealer in lumber, had a vast saw-mill, built barges, and ran rafts . . He had done business with Ignát, and Fomá had many a time seen this old man, tall and straight as a pine-tree, with his great white beard, and long arms. His big, handsome

figure, with its open countenance and clear gaze incited in Fomá a feeling of reverence for Shtchúroff, although he had heard people say that this "lumber-dealer" had grown wealthy by other means than honest toil, and led an evil life at home, in an obscure hamlet of the forest region. His father, too, had described to Fomá, how Shtchúroff in his youth, while he was still a poor peasant, had sheltered a convict in his kitchen-garden, in his bath-house, and this convict had worked for him at the manufacture of counterfeit money. From that day forth, Ananíi had begun to grow rich. One day his bath-house burned down, and in its ashes there was found the corpse of a man with a cloven skull. It was said in the village, that Shtchúroff himself had murdered his workman,—had murdered him, and then burned him up. That sort of thing had happened more than once with the good-looking old man; but such tales were related concerning many rich men of the town,—all of them, it was asserted, had amassed their millions by robbery, murder, and—chiefly—by the sale of counterfeit money. Fomá had listened to such stories from his childhood up, and never before had he reflected whether they were true or not. He knew also, concerning Shtchúroff, that the old man had got rid of two wives,—one of them had died the very first night after the wedding in Ananíi's arms. Then he got his son's wife away from him, and his son took to drink through grief, and almost came to ruin through drunkenness, but recovered himself in time, and went off to save himself in a hermitage, on the Irgíz. But when his daughter-in-law mistress expired, Shtchúroff took into his house a dumb girl—a pauper,—was still living with her, and she had recently borne him a dead child . . . As he went to see Ananíi at the inn where the latter was stopping, Fomá involuntarily recalled all he had heard about

the old man from his father and from other people, and he was conscious that Shtchúroff had become terribly interesting to him.

When Fomá, on opening the door, paused respectfully on the threshold of the tiny chamber with a single window, from which nothing was visible save the rusty roof of the neighboring house,—he perceived that old Shtchúroff had only just waked up, and was sitting on his bed, propped up on it by his hands, and was staring at the floor, so much bent over that his long, white beard lay on his knees. But even thus bent, he was large.

"Who came in?" Ananíi asked, without raising his head, in a husky, angry voice.

"I. How do you do, Ananíi Sávvitch?"

The old man slowly raised his head, and screwing up his large eyes, glanced at Fomá.

"Ignát's son, isn't it?"

"The same."

"Well, come here,—sit down there, by the window—let's see what you look like. Will you have some tea?"

"I should be glad to."

"Corridor-waiter!" shouted the old man, inflating his chest, and gathering up his beard in his fist, he began a silent inspection of Fomá. Fomá also furtively scrutinized him.

The old man's lofty brow was all furrowed with wrinkles, and the skin upon it was swarthy. Curly locks of gray hair covered his temples and his pointed ears; calm, blue eyes gave to the upper portion of his face a wise, virtuous expression. But his cheeks and lips were gross, red, and seemed out of keeping with his countenance. The long, thin nose, with its downward curve, seemed to be endeavoring to conceal itself in the white mustaches;

when the old man moved his lips, small, yellow teeth gleamed from beneath them. He wore a pink cotton shirt, girt about with a silken belt, and full black trousers tucked into his boots. Fomá eyed his lips and said to himself that the old man certainly was the sort of person he was reported to be.

"As a small boy you were more like your father," remarked Shtchúroff suddenly, with a sigh. Then, after a pause, he asked: "Do you remember your father? Do you pray for him?"

"You must, you must pray!" he added, after listening to Fomá's brief reply. "Ignát was a great sinner—and he died impenitent—struck down of a sudden—a great sinner!"

"He was no more sinful, I think, than others," replied Fomá with a scowl, taking offence on behalf of his father.

"Than whom, for example?" inquired Shtchúroff sternly.

"There are plenty of sinners!"

"There is but one man on earth more sinful than the deceased Ignát—that accursed god-father of yours, Yáshka," said the old man, pronouncing each word with great distinctness.

"Are you perfectly sure of that?" asked Fomá, with a grin.

"I? I know it!" said Shtchúroff with conviction, nodding his head, and his eyes darkened. "I, also, must present myself before the Lord—and that not lightly.—I shall carry with me a heavy burden before His holy face—I myself, also, have delighted the devil—but I believe in the Lord's mercy, while Yáshka believes in nothing at all—neither in dreams nor in the twittering of birds—Yáshka doesn't believe in God—that I know! And be-

cause he does not believe, he will get his punishment yet, on earth!"

"And do you know that also?" asked Fomá.

"That, also.—Don't you imagine—for I know, also, that you consider me ridiculous to listen to.—A sharp-sighted fellow, in sooth! But a man who has sinned much, is always wise. Sin teaches a man. Therefore Yáshka Mayákin is wise to a rare degree."

Fomá, as he listened to the old man's hoarse and confident voice, thought to himself:

"Evidently, he scents death!"

The corridor-waiter, a small man, with a pale countenance which seemed, as it were, effaced, brought in the samovár, and hastened from the room with swift, short steps. The old man sorted over some small parcels on the window-sill, and said, without looking at Fomá:

"You're audacious. And your glance is obscure. There used to be more clear-eyed folks, formerly—because in earlier days, souls were clearer. Everything used to be more simple—both people and sins—but now, everything has become complicated, ekhe-he!"

He brewed the tea, seated himself opposite Fomá, and began again:

"At your age,—your father was a water-pumper, and then stopped near our village with the caravan,—at your age, Ignát was as clear as glass to me. All you had to do was to look at him, and you immediately saw what sort of a man he was. But when I look at you—I don't see what you are. What sort of a fellow are you? That's what you don't know yourself, my lad—and that's why you'll come to grief. All the folks now-a-days will come to grief, because they don't know themselves. But life is a maze of wind-fallen trees, and a man must understand

how to find his way through it. And everyone goes astray, and the devil rejoices.—Are you married?"

"Not yet," said Fomá.

"That's just it—not married, but polluted long ago, I suppose.—Well, and do you work much at your business?"

"Sometimes—I'm with my god-father for the time being."

"What work have you on hand now?" said the old man, shaking his head, and his eyes kept sparkling, now darkening, now clearing again.—"You have to toil! In former days, a merchant travelled with horses on his business—he drove through snow-storms, through the night! Robbers lay in wait for him on the road and murdered him—he died a martyr, washing out his sins with his blood. . Now merchants travel in railway carriages,—they send telegrams—and now, just think what they have invented, that a man can talk in his office, and he can be heard five versts away—and that can't be done without the devil's brain! A man sits and sins, simply because he's bored with nothing to do: a machine does everything for him . . and without labor, a man is ruined! He has fitted himself out with machines, and thinks it is all right! But machinery is the devil's trap for you! He catches you with it. Toil leaves no time for sin, but with a machine, you're free! Through freedom man perishes, as the worm, the inhabitant of the bowels of the earth, perishes in the sunlight. Through freedom man perishes!"

And as old Ananíi uttered his words distinctly and positively, he tapped the table four times with his finger. His face beamed with spiteful triumph, his breast swelled high, and the silvery hair of his beard quivered noiselessly upon it. Fomá shuddered as he gazed at him and listened to his remarks, for in them resounded steadfast faith, and

the strength of this faith disconcerted Fomá. He had already forgotten everything he knew about the old man,—and he had believed it to be the truth only a short time before.

"He who gives freedom to the body ruins the soul!" said Ananíi, and gazed very strangely at Fomá, as though he perceived behind him someone who was pained and terrified at the sound of his words, and whose pain and terror delighted him.—"And all of you people of the present day will perish through freedom. The devil has laid hold of you—he has deprived you of your toil, by forcing upon you his machines and telegrams.—And freedom will devour the souls of men.—Come now, tell me, why are children worse than their fathers? Because of freedom,—yes! Because they drink, and lead depraved lives with women—and they have less health because they have less work—and then have no cheerfulness of spirit because they have no cares. Joy comes in time of repose—but no one rests now-a-days."

"Well," said Fomá softly, "I suppose men drank and led depraved lives just as much, in former days."

"Do you know? You'd better hold your tongue!" shouted Ananíi, with a morose flash of the eye. "Men had more strength in those days—and their sins were according to their strength. Then people were like oaks. And the judgment of the Lord upon them will be according to their strength. Their bodies will be weighed, and the angels will measure their blood . . and the angels of God will see to it that their sin shall not exceed in weight the weight of their blood and their body—do you understand? The Lord will not condemn a wolf if it devours a sheep,—but if a miserable little rat is guilty of killing a sheep—He will condemn the rat!"

"How do folks know in what way God will judge a man?" asked Fomá thoughtfully. "A visible judgment is necessary."

"Why a visible judgment?"

"That folks may understand."

"And who, save God, is to be my judge?"

Fomá glanced at the old man, and made no reply, but dropped his head. Again he recalled to mind the fugitive convict, whom Shtchúroff had murdered and burned, and again he believed that this was so. And the women—his wife and his mistress—whom this old man had certainly hunted into their graves with his oppressive caresses, had crushed with his bony breast, the sap of whose life he had drunk with those thick lips which were even now scarlet, as though the blood were not yet dry on them of the women who had died in the embrace of his long, sinewy arms. And here was he, awaiting death, which was already somewhere near him, reckoning up his sins, condemning people and condemning himself, of necessity—and saying: "Who, save God, is to be my judge?"

"Is he afraid or not?" Fomá asked himself, and fell into meditation, as he furtively scrutinized the old man.

"Yes, my lad! reflect,—" said Shtchúroff, wagging his head,—"reflect, how you are to live. You have small capital in your heart, and big habits—aren't you going to become bankrupt to yourself! Ho-ho-ho!"

"How do you know what and how much I have in my heart?" said Fomá gruffly, insulted by his laughter.

"Why, I can see! I know everything—because—I've been alive for a long time! O-o-ho-ho! What a long time I have lived! Trees have grown up and been hewn down, and houses have been built from them—and the houses have even become decrepit—and I have beheld it

all and am still alive. And sometimes, as I recall my life, I say to myself: 'Is it possible that one man could have done so much? Is it possible that I have undergone all that?'"—The old man cast a stern glance at Fomá, shook his head, and relapsed into silence.

Silence reigned. Outside the window, on the roof of the house, there was a faint crackling sound; the noise of wheels, and the subdued voices of people in conversation, was borne up from the street below. The samovár on the table sang its melancholy song. Shtchúroff stared intently at his glass of tea, and stroked his beard—and a husky noise was audible in his chest, as though some heavy weight were being shifted about there.

"Is it difficult for you to live without your father?" his voice rang out.

"I'm getting used to it," replied Fomá.

"You're rich. And when Yákoff dies, you'll be still richer . . he'll bequeath all to you."

"I don't want it."

"Where else should he leave it? He has only a daughter,—and you ought to take the daughter. . What if she is your god-sister and foster-sister—there's no harm in that! That can be arranged. And you ought to get married. . . What's the use of leading a bachelor's life? I suppose you are still running after the girls?"

"No."

"You don't say so! Eh-khe-khe! The merchant is dying out. A forester once told me—whether he was lying or not, I don't know—that in former times, all dogs were wolves, and the wolves degenerated into dogs. It's the same way with our class—we, also, shall soon all be dogs. We study the sciences, and stick fashionable hats on our polls, and do everything that's necessary to lose our char-

acteristic features. And there's no way of distinguishing us from other folks. We've instituted the custom of sending all our children to the gymnasium. And merchants, and nobles and commoners are all forced to become of the same color—they are all dressed in gray and taught alike,—and they grow men as they grow trees. Why? Nobody knows. Even one log of wood is known from another by its grain,—but here people are trying to plane off men so that all shall have but one face.—We old folks will soon be buried—ye-es! Perhaps no one will believe, fifty years or so hence, that I lived in the world, I . . Ananíi, the son of Sávva, by surname Shtchúroff—so there! And that I, Ananíi, feared no one except God. And that I was a peasant in my youth, and had two and a half desyatíns[1] of land, and in my old age had amassed eleven thousand desyatíns, and all forest-land—and in money, perhaps about two millions."

"That's what they always say—money?" said Fomá with displeasure.—"But what joy does a man get from it?"

"Mm . . " grunted Shtchúroff.—"You'll make a bad merchant, if you don't understand the power of money."

"Who does understand it?" asked Fomá.

"I!" said Shtchúroff confidently. "And so does every sensible man — Yáshka understands money. That's a great deal, my lad! Spread it out before you and reflect—what does it contain within itself? Then you will understand, that all this is the power of mankind, that it is the brains of men. . Thousands of persons have staked their lives on your money, and thousands are still doing it. And you can fling all that money into the fire, and watch

[1] A desyatín is 2.70 acres.—*Translator.*

how it burns. And at that moment, you will regard yourself as the master."

"People don't do that."

"Because fools don't have money. Money is invested in business,—through business the masses are fed,—and you are the master over all those masses. Why did God create man? That man might pray to Him. He was alone, and He found it tiresome to be alone—well, and He also craved power. And as man was created in His image and in His likeness, as it is written, man also craves power. And what, except money, gives power?—So there you have it.—Well, and have you brought me any money?"

"No," replied Fomá. The old man's talk had made his head feel heavy and turbid, and he was glad that the conversation had passed at last, to business.

"That's unjust!" said Shtchúroff, knitting his brows sternly. "The time is up—you must pay."

"To-morrow you shall receive one half. . ."

"Why one half? Give me all!"

"Why, we are in great need of money just now."

"And you haven't got it? But I must have it."

"Wait!"

"Eh, my good fellow, I won't wait! You are not your father,—your sort, the milksop sort, are unreliable folks—in the course of a month, you may get the whole business tangled up—and I shall suffer loss in consequence. You just give me the whole tomorrow, or I'll protest the note. I want it right away!"

Fomá looked at Shtchúroff and was amazed. He was not at all the same old man, who had so lately been talking about the devil with the mien of a trance-seer. His face and his eyes had been quite different then,—but now his look was harsh, his lips wore a pitiless smile, and cer-

tain sinews in his cheeks, round about his nostrils, quivered greedily. Fomá perceived that if he did not pay up on time the man really would not spare him, but would instantly disgrace the firm by protesting the note.

"Evidently, your affairs are in a bad shape?" grinned Shtchúroff. "Come, say frankly—where have you squandered your father's money?"

Fomá felt a desire to test the old man.

"Business isn't very brisk," he said, with a frown, "there are no contracts, we have received no earnest-money,—well, and things are going rather hard."

"So-o! You want assistance?"

"If you will be so good—pray remit the payment," entreated Fomá, modestly lowering his eyes.

"Mm. . So I'm to aid you out of friendship? All right, I'll help you. ."

"How much time will you give me?" inquired Fomá.

"Say six months."

"I thank you humbly."

"No need. Your debt is eleven thousand six hundred. Now, this is what you are to do: make me out a note for fifteen thousand, pay the interest on that sum in advance, —and as security, I'll take a mortgage on both your barges. ."

"Send the note to me to-morrow. I'll pay you in full."

Shtchúroff rose heavily from his chair, and without dropping his eyes before Fomá's sarcastic gaze, he calmly scratched his breast as he said:

"Very well."

"Thanks—for your kindness."

"That's nothing! If you hadn't paid up, I'd have been kind to you!" said the old man indolently, displaying his teeth in a snarl.

"Ye-es! If anyone falls into your clutches. . ."

"He'll find it warm. ."

"You'll make it hot for him, there's no denying that."

"Come now, I say, my lad, stop that!" said Shtchúroff grimly. "Although you think yourself anything but stupid—it's early in the day. . He played for nothing, and now he has begun to brag of his winnings! You just win something from me, and then you may caper with joy.—Good-bye. Get ready your money for to-morrow."

"Don't worry. . . Good-bye!"

"God be with you!"

As Fomá emerged from the room, he heard the old man give a prolonged, loud yawn, and then begin to chant, in a husky bass voice:

"Of thy me-er-cy open unto us the door, Oh blessed Birth-Giver of God."

Fomá bore away with him from the old man a twofold feeling: Shtchúroff both pleased him and, at the same time, repelled him.

He recalled the old man's remarks concerning sin, he meditated on his faith in God's mercy,—and the old man aroused in him a sentiment that was akin to reverence. "And this one, also, talks about life—and he knows his sins, but he does not weep, he does not complain. . . 'I have sinned—I will bear the consequences.'—Well—and she?"

He remembered Madame Medýnsky, and his heart contracted with grief.

"But she—repents . . you can't understand, in her case, whether she does it deliberately, in order to escape judgment, or whether her heart really aches.—Who shall judge me, save God, he says. So there you have it!"

It seemed to Fomá that he envied Ananíi, and the young

fellow hastened to remind himself of Shtchúroff's attempts to cheat him. This evoked in him disgust for the old man, he could not reconcile his feelings, and in his bewilderment, he began to laugh.

"Well, I have been to see Shtchúroff!" he said, as he reached Mayákin's house and seated himself at the table.

Mayákin, clad in a dirty dressing-gown, and counting-board in hand, wriggled impatiently in his leather arm-chair, and said briskly:

"Pour him out some tea, Liubáva! Go on, Fomá. I must be at the City Council by nine o'clock, so tell us quickly."

Fomá, laughingly, narrated how Shtchúroff had proposed that he should re-write the note of hand.

"E-Ekh!" exclaimed Yákoff Tarásovitch regretfully, shaking his head.—"You have spoiled the whole dinner, my dear fellow! How can one deal straightforwardly with the man? Phew! The evil one prompted me to send you! I ought to have gone myself. I'd have wound him round my finger!"

"Come now, not much! He says—'I'm an oak'—."

"An oak? Well, I'm a saw . . . An oak! An oak is a fine tree, but its fruits are fit only for swine. So it turns out that the oak is downright stupid."

"Well, but we must pay up, all the same."

"There's no hurry about that—with clever people. But you are ready to rush off at top speed to pay that money . . You, a merchant!"

Yákoff Tarásovitch was decidedly displeased with his godson. He frowned, and angrily commanded his daughter, who was pouring the tea in silence:

"Push the sugar this way . . don't you see that I can't reach it?"

Liubóff's face was pale, her eyes were troubled, and her hands moved languidly, awkwardly. Fomá glanced at her, and said to himself:

"How meek she is when her father is present!"

"What did he talk to you about?" Mayákin asked him.

"About sins."

"Well, of course! Every man sets a high value on his own business . . and he's a—manufacturer of sins. They've been weeping for him this long time past in the galleys and in hell—pining for him, waiting for him—they're in a hurry to see him."

"He speaks with weight,—" said Fomá thoughtfully, as he stirred his tea in the glass.

"Did he revile me?" inquired Mayákin, with a vicious contortion of face.

"Yes."

"And what did you do?"

"Well, I . . I listened."

"Mm . . what did you hear?"

"A strong man wins pardon, he says, but for a weak man there is no pardon."

"Wisdom itself, you think! Why, the very fleas know that!"

The scornful bearing of his god-father toward Shtchúroff irritated Fomá, for some reason or other, and, looking the old man in the face, he said with a grin:

"And he doesn't love you."

"Nobody loves me, my dear fellow!" said Mayákin proudly. "And they have no cause to love me, I'm not a girl. But, on the other hand, they do respect me. And only those are respected who are feared."

And the old man bestowed a boastful wink upon his god-son.

"He speaks with weight," repeated Fomá. "He complains. The genuine merchant is dying out, he says. He says that all people are now taught alike,—so that all may be alike,—with one face."

"He thinks that is not proper?"

"Evidently, he thinks so."

"The fo-ol!" drawled Mayákin disdainfully.

"Why? Is this good?" asked Fomá, with a distrustful glance at his god-father.

"What is good, we don't know, but what is sensible, that we can see . .—If we see that divers people are driven together in one place, and that there one opinion is impressed on them all, we must acknowledge that that is sensible. Because,—what is a man in the Empire? Nothing more than a simple brick, but all the bricks must be of the same size, . . . do you understand? And people who are all identical in height and weight—I can place as I please."

"Who finds it pleasant to be a brick?" said Fomá surlily.

"'Tis not a question as to what is pleasant, but as to the fact. If you are made of firm material, you'll not get worn away. It's not everyone that can rub his own phiz . . but if you beat some men with a hammer, they may turn out to be gold. But if a man's pate cracks, what are you going to do about it? It simply shows that it was weak."

"He also talked about labor,—'everything is done by machinery,' he said, 'and people are getting spoiled with it.'"

"That old woman doesn't know what he's talking about!" said Mayákin, with a scornful wave of the hand. "It's amazing to me, what an appetite you have for all sorts of nonsense! Why is it?"

"And it isn't true?" asked Fomá, with a gloomy smile.

"What true thing can he know? Machinery! That old blockhead had better reflect what a machine is. Iron! consequently, you have no pity on it, once set up, it forges rubles for you, without any words, without any trouble; set it going, and it keeps on going. But a man—he is uneasy and pitiful,—he becomes a very pitiful creature indeed, at times; he howls and grieves, and weeps and implores—he drinks himself drunk,—and he has, akh! how much that is quite superfluous to me! But a machine, like a yard-stick, contains precisely what its use requires, and no more.—Well, I'm going to dress . . 'tis time." He rose and went away, shuffling his slippers noisily across the floor. Fomá gazed after him, and said in a low voice, knitting his brows:

"The deuce himself couldn't make head or tail of it all —one says one thing, the other another."

"And it's the same way with the books," said Liubóff softly.

Fomá glanced at her, smiling kindly. And she responded with an uncertain smile. Her eyes looked weary and sad.

"You still keep on reading?" asked Fomá.

"Ye-es," replied the girl dejectedly.

"And you still feel melancholy?"

"Disgustingly.—Because I'm alone. There's nobody to say a word to."

"You're in a bad fix."

To this she made no reply, but only dropped her head, and began slowly to pass her fingers through the fringe of the towel.

"You ought to marry," said Fomá, feeling sorry for her.

"Stop that, please," replied Liubóff, wrinkling her brow in an ugly way.

"Stop what? Of course you will marry . ."

"Exactly!" cried the girl softly with a sigh.—"That's exactly what I think—I must—that is to say, I shall have to marry. But how does one get married Do you know—I feel now as though a mist hung between me and other people—a thick, thick mist!"

"From the books," interposed Fomá, with conviction.

"Wait! And I am beginning not to understand what is going on. Nothing pleases me. I have become averse to everything. Nothing is as it should be, nothing is right . . I perceive, I understand this, but say that things are not right, and why they are not right—I cannot."

"It's not right, not right," muttered Fomá.—"It comes to you from your books,—yes it does. Although I, also, feel that things are not as they should be . . . That may come from the fact that we are both young still, from our stupidity."

"At first it seemed to me," said Liubóff, paying no heed to him, "that I understood everything in the books . . But now—."

"Give them up!" counselled Fomá, scornfully.

"Ah, enough of that! Is it possible to give them up? You know, how many different ideas there are in the world! There are some which scorch your brain. In one book it is asserted that everything which exists on earth is endowed with reason—."

"Everything?" queried Fomá.

"Everything! And in another—the contrary is asserted!"

"My patience! Isn't that nonsense?"

"What are you talking about?" asked Mayákin, appearing on the doorway, dressed in a long frock-coat, with some sort of medals around his neck, and on his breast.

"Oh, nothing," said Liubóff gloomily.

"About books," added Fomá.

"What books?"

"Why, she is reading—she has read, that everything on earth is endowed with reason."

"Well!"

"Well—and I say, it's stuff and nonsense!"

"Hm—ye-es." Yákoff Tarásovitch reflected, plucking at his beard and screwing up his eyes the while.

"What sort of a book is it?" he inquired of his daughter, after a pause.

"A little one—with a yellow cover," said Liubóff reluctantly.

"You just put it on my table. That was said to make mischief—that everything on earth has reason! . . You see . . someone has taken it into his head . . Hm—ye-es—that's even expressed very skilfully . . And if it weren't for the fools, it would be perfectly true. But as fools are always to be found where they don't belong,—'tis impossible to say that everything on earth is endowed with reason.—But I'll take a look at that little book—perhaps it has some sense in it . . Good-bye, Fomá! Are you going to sit on here, or to drive with me?"

"I'll sit here a while."

"Well, all right."

Liubóff and Fomá were again left alone together.

"What a man he is," said Fomá, with a nod in the direction of his departing god-father.

"What do you mean by that?"

"He has a retort for everything, he wants to cover everything up with his remarks."

"Ye-es, he's clever.—But what he does not understand is—how difficult life is for me," said Liubóff sadly.

"Neither do I understand it—you imagine a lot of things . ."

"What do I imagine?" cried the girl in exasperation.

"Why, all that—surely, those are not your ideas—they are someone else's . ."

"Someone else's—someone else's . ."

She was on the point of saying something sharp, but broke off, and held her peace. Fomá looked at her, and setting Madame Medýnsky beside her, he said mournfully to himself:

"How different everything is—both men and women—and you always feel the difference . ."

They sat opposite each other, both buried in thought, and neither looked at the other.

Twilight was descending out of doors, and in the room it was already quite dark. The breeze was rocking the linden trees, their boughs were scratching against the walls of the house, as though they were cold, and were entreating admittance to the rooms.

"Liúba!" said Fomá softly.

She raised her head, and looked at him.

"Do you know—I have qua-quarrelled with Madame Medýnsky."

"What about?" asked Liubóff, with increased animation.

"Oh, because—it came about that she insulted me, . . insulted . ."

"Well, it's a good thing that you have quarrelled with her," said the girl approvingly, "otherwise, she would have turned your head . . she's a worthless creature, a coquette . . she's worse—ugh! what things I know about her!"

"She's not a worthless creature at all," said Fomá morosely. "And you don't know anything—you're just talking nonsense!"

"Oh, excuse me!"

"Now see here, Liúba," said Fomá softly and imploringly, "don't you say anything bad about her to me—I won't have it. I know everything, by heaven! She told me herself!"

"He-erself?!" exclaimed Liubóff in amazement. "Well—she is a strange creature! What did she say?"

"'I am guilty,'" articulated Fomá, with an effort, with a wry smile.

"Is that all?" There was a sound of disappointment in the girl's question: Fomá recognized it, and inquired, hopefully:

"Isn't that enough?"

"What's the next step?"

"That's exactly what I'm thinking about."

"Are you—very fond of her?"

Fomá made no reply for a while, stared out of the window, then answered:

"I don't know.—I think I am—more now than before . . ."

"Before your quarrel?"

"Yes."

"I'm astonished; how can you love such a woman?" asked the girl, shrugging her shoulders.

"Such a woman? Of course I can!" exclaimed Fomá.

"I don't understand . . No, it's only because you have become attached to her, that it's better you should not see her."

"Not see her!" assented Fomá, and, after a pause, he added irresolutely:—"Perhaps there is no one better . ."

"Among our people," interposed Liubóff.

"I need her—very much! Because, you see, I'm ashamed in her presence!"

"Why so?"

"In general. I'm afraid of her—that is to say, I don't want her to think ill of me—as she does of others. Sometimes I'm disgusted! I say to myself—shall I go on a spree until all my nerves begin to jingle? Then I recall her, and can't make up my mind to do it. And it's the same about everything—I think of her: and what if she were to hear of it? And I'm afraid to do it."

"Ye-es," drawled the girl thoughtfully, "that means that you love her. If I were in love, I'd think of the man in the same way—what he would say."

"And everything about her is—peculiar," went on Fomá softly, "she's so beautiful. Oh Lord, how beautiful! And so tiny, like a child."

"What took place between you?" asked Liubóff.

Fomá moved himself and his chair closer to her, and bending over, and, for some reason, lowering his voice, began his story. He talked on, and in proportion as he recalled the words which Madame Medýnsky had said to him, the feelings evoked by those words rose again.

"I said to her—'Oh, you creature! You've been playing with me—why?'" said Fomá, angrily and reproachfully. But Liúba, with a flush of excitement on her cheeks, encouraged him with an approving nod:

"Exactly! That was good! Well, and what did she say?"

"She made no reply!" said Fomá sadly, twitching his shoulders.—"That is, she said—various things—but what of that?"

He waved his hand, and ceased. Liúba toyed with her braid of hair, and maintained silence also. The samovár had already become extinguished. The darkness in the room grew more and more intense, the outlook through the windows had a sort of turbid aspect, and the black branches

of the lindens swayed to and fro, in a melancholy way, there outside.

"You might light up," resumed Fomá.

"What unhappy creatures you and I both are," said Liúba, and sighed.

This displeased Fomá.

"I'm not unhappy," he retorted, in a firm tone. "I simply haven't yet got used to living."

"The man who does not know what he is going to do tomorrow, is unhappy!" said Liúba sadly. "And I don't know. Neither do you. And whither are we to go? But go we must. For some reason or other, my heart is never at rest . . it is perpetually quivering, and in it there is some longing . ."

"It's the same with me," said Fomá.—"I began to think —but what about? I can't explain to myself—and my heart, too, is heavy. Ekh!—But I must go to the Club."

"Don't go away," entreated Liúba.

"I must, someone is expecting me there. I must go. Good-bye!"

"Until we meet again!" She offered him her hand, and gazed mournfully into his eyes.

"Are you going to bed?" asked Fomá, pressing her hand vigorously.

"I shall read a little."

"You behave to your books as a drunkard does to his brandy," said the young fellow with sympathy.

"What is there that's better?"

As he walked along the street, he glanced at the windows of the house, and in one of them he caught a glimpse of Liúba's face. It was as indefinite as was everything which the girl had said to him, as were her longings. Fomá

nodded to her, and with a conscious sensation of his superiority over her, he said to himself:

"And she has lost her way too—like the other one."

At this memory, he shook his head, as though desirous of frightening off the thought of Madame Medýnsky, and hastened his pace.

Night had arrived, and it was cool. A cold, invigorating breeze swept, in gusts, through the street, driving the litter along the sidewalks, and casting dust in the faces of passers-by. It was dark, and several persons were striding hastily through the gloom. Fomá frowned with the dust, screwed up his eyes, and said to himself:

"If a woman meets me now—it will be a sign that Sófya Pávlovna will greet me cordially, as of old. I will call on her tomorrow. But if it be a man—I will not go to her tomorrow, . . I'll wait a while longer."

A dog met him, and this irritated him to such a degree, that he wanted to thrash the dog with his cane.

In the buffet of the Club, jolly Úkhtishtcheff met him. He was standing near the door, chatting with a fat man with whiskers, but, on catching sight of Gordyéeff, he went to meet him, smiling and saying:

"How are you, my modest young millionaire!"

His merry character pleased Fomá, who always liked to meet him. Pressing Úkhtishtcheff's hand vigorously and good-naturedly, Fomá asked him:

"How do you know that I am modest?"

"He asks! A man who lives like a hermit, doesn't drink, doesn't gamble, doesn't love the women—ah, yes! Do you know, Fomá Ignátievitch? Our incomparable patroness is going abroad tomorrow to be gone all summer."

"Sófya Pávlovna?" asked Fomá slowly.

"Yes, of course! The sun of my life will set—and, perhaps, the sun of your life also?"

Úkhtishtcheff made a comically sly grimace, and cast a glance at Fomá's face.

But the latter stood before him, and felt that his head was sinking upon his breast, and he could not help it.

"Yes, the radiant Aurora . ."

"Is Madame Medýnsky going away?" rang out a fat, bass voice. "Splendid! I'm deligh-ted!"

"Permit me to ask why?" exclaimed Úkhtishtcheff.

Fomá smiled stupidly, and stared abstractedly at the man with whiskers—who was Úkhtishtcheff's interlocutor. The latter stroked his mustaches, with a dignified gesture, and from beneath them poured out upon Fomá ponderous, fat, repulsive words.

"Why, beca-ause, you see, there'll be one co-cot-te less in town."

"Fy, Martýn Nikititch!" said Úkhtishtcheff reprovingly, with a frown.

"How do you know that she is a coquette?" inquired Fomá gruffly, stepping up to the man with whiskers. The latter eyed him over with a disdainful glance, turned away, and waggling his hips, drawled out:

"I didn't say—a co-quette."

"You mustn't speak like that, Martýn Nikititch, of a woman who . . ." began Úkhtishtcheff in a persuasive tone, but Fomá interrupted him.

"Permit me! I wish to ask that gentleman what was that word which he employed?"

And as he spoke thus, firmly and quietly, Fomá rammed his hands deep down into the pockets of his trousers, but thrust forward his chest, so that his figure instantaneously assumed an obviously defiant aspect. The bearded man again eyed him over, and smiled derisively.

"Gentlemen!" exclaimed Úkhtishtcheff softly.

"I said-a co-cot-te," remarked the bearded man, moving his lips as though he relished the word. "But if you do not understand it, I ca-an explain . ."

"Yes," said Fomá, drawing a deep breath, and never taking his eyes from him, "you certainly will explain."

Úkhtishtcheff clasped his hands, and rushed headlong away from them.

"A cocotte, if you care to know,—is a venal woman," said the bearded man, in a low tone, approaching his big, fat face to Fomá.

Fomá gave a low growl, and before the man could retreat, with his right hand he seized hold of the bearded man's curly hair, sprinkled with gray. With a convulsive movement of the arm, he began to shake his head, and his whole huge, ponderous body, but he raised his left hand on high, and said, in a dull voice, keeping time with the shaking:

"Don't . . . revile—behind a person's . . back . . . but rail . . . straight . . to his . . . face . . straight—to his . . . face . ."

He experienced an ardent delight, perceiving that the thick arms were waving ridiculously in the air, and that the legs of the man whom he was shaking, were giving way under him, and scraping along the floor. His gold watch flew out of his pocket, dangling from the chain over his round paunch. Intoxicated with his strength, and with the humiliation of that stately man, brimming with the ardent sensation of malice, quivering all over with the happiness of revenge, Fomá dragged him over the floor, and bellowed dully, viciously, in fierce joy. During those minutes he experienced a vast sensation—the sensation of liberation from a wearisome burden, which had already long oppressed his breast with sadness and impotency. He felt himself seized

from behind, by the waist and shoulders, his arm was grasped, bent, wrenched; he felt someone crushing his toes, but he saw nothing, as his blood-shot eyes were intently rivetted on the dark, heavy mass which was groaning and writhing in his hands. At last they tore him away, pounced upon him, and as athwart a reddish haze, he saw before him, on the floor, at his feet, the man whom he had so unmercifully thrashed. Dishevelled, in disarray, the man was sprawling his legs about the floor in the effort to regain his feet; two persons clad in black were supporting him under the armpits, his arms were dangling in the air like broken wings, and in a voice which gurgled with sobs, he shrieked at Fomá:

"You can't thrash—me! You can't! I have an Order . . you scoundrel! Oh, you scoundrel! I have children —everyone knows me! Ras-cal! Savage! O—o—o! I'll challenge you to a duel!"

But Úkhtishtcheff said, sonorously, straight in Fomá's ear:

"Come away! My dear fellow, for God's sake!"

"Wait till I give him a kick in his ugly face," entreated Fomá. But they dragged him off. His ears rang, his heart beat hard, but he felt relieved, well. And at the entrance to the Club, after drawing a deep, free breath, he said to Úkhtishtcheff, with a good-natured smile:

"I gave him a good healthy licking, didn't I?"

"Listen!" cried the jolly secretary, much agitated. "You must excuse me, but it was savage! Deuce take it— 'tis the first time I have ever seen such a thing."

"The dear man!" said Fomá amiably. "Wasn't he worth the trouncing? Isn't he a dastard? How can he say such things behind a person's back? No, let him go to her, and say it to her—straight out, to her herself . ."

"Permit me—devil take you! Why, surely, it wasn't for her sake alone that you gave him that drubbing?"

"What do you mean by it's not being for her sake? For whom, then?" asked the astonished Fomá.

"For whom? I don't know . . obviously, you had your reasons! Phew, oh Lord! What a scene! I shall never forget it as long as I live!"

"And who is he, anyway?" inquired Fomá, and suddenly burst out laughing.—"How he yelled! the fool!"

Úkhtishtcheff stared intently in his face, and asked him:

"Tell me—is it an actual fact that you don't know whom you have thrashed? And was it, really, on Sófya Pávlovna's account only?"

"By God, it's so!" asseverated Fomá.

"There . . . It's a miserable business!"—He paused, shrugged his shoulders in amazement, and waved his hand despairingly, then resumed his course along the sidewalk, casting a sidelong glance at Fomá.—"You'll pay for this, Fomá Ignátievitch."

"Will he summon me before the justice of the peace?"

"God grant he may. He's the vice-Governor's son-in-law."

"You don't say so!" said Fomá slowly, and his face fell.

"Yes, sir. To speak the plain truth, he's a worthless scamp, and a sharper. Taking that fact as our point of departure, it must be confessed that he deserves his drubbing. But, taking into consideration that the lady, in whose defence you came forward, is also . . ."

"Sir!" [1] said Fomá firmly, laying his hand on Úkhtishtcheff's shoulder, "you have always pleased me greatly, and

[1] Fomá uses the word bárin, *master*, as to a superior, or man of noble birth, in contradistinction to the merchant and peasant classes.—*Translator.*

now you are walking with me. I understand it, I know how to prize it. Only, you must not say anything bad about her to me. Whatever she may be, in your opinion, in mine —she is dear to me . . to me she is the best of women. So I say to you plainly, since you are walking with me,— don't touch her. I consider her good—therefore, she is good."

Úkhtishtcheff recognized in Fomá's voice more emotion, glanced at him, and said thoughtfully:

"You're a curious man, I must confess . ."

"I'm a simple man— a savage man—I've thrashed that fellow, and I feel jolly. Now let what will come of it."

"I'm afraid something bad will come of it. Do you know—frankness for frankness—I like you . . although —hm! it's dangerous to be with you . . When this knightly mood comes over you, a man is likely to get a sound drubbing from you . . ."

"Well, I've had enough of it! I think this is the first time I've done such a thing—I shan't be thrashing people every day," said Fomá, in confusion. His companion broke into a laugh.

"Oh you—monster! I'll tell you what—it's savage to fight, it's abominable,—excuse me for saying so.—But I will say to you, that in this particular case, you made a lucky choice. You have thrashed a debauchee, a cynic, a parasite—and a man who escaped unpunished after robbing his nephews."

"Thank God for that!" ejaculated Fomá with gratification. "I've punished him a little."

"A little? Well, very good, we'll assume that it is a little. Only, see here, my child—permit me to give you a piece of advice—I'm a man of the law . . That Knyázeff is a rascal, it's true. But you mustn't thrash even a rascal,

because he is a social being, who is under the paternal protection of the law. You mustn't touch him until he transgresses the limits of the statutes concerning punishments. And even then it is not your place, but the place of us judges to give him his due. So, you must just have patience."

"And will he soon fall into your clutches?" asked Fomá ingenuously.

"N-nobody knows. As he is anything but a stupid fellow, it is probable that he never will. And all the days of his life, he will exist upon one and the same degree of equality before the law as you and I do . . O, heavens, what am I saying?" sighed Úkhtishtcheff comically.

"Are you betraying secrets?" grinned Fomá.

"Not exactly secrets, but—I ought not to be frivolous. The d-devil! But, you see,—this affair has enlivened me. —Really, Nemesis is true to herself even when she simply kicks out like a horse."

Fomá suddenly halted, as though he had encountered some obstacle in his path.

"Nemesis is the goddess of justice," rattled on Úkhtishtcheff. "What's the matter with you?"

"You see, it began," said Fomá slowly, "with your saying that she was going away."

"Who?"

"Sófya Pávlovna."

"Yes, she's going away. Well, sir?"

He stood opposite Fomá, and gazed at him, with a smile in his eyes. Gordyéeff remained silent, with drooping head, and jabbed the stones of the sidewalk with his cane.

"Come along," said Úkhtishtcheff.

Fomá walked on, remarking indifferently:

"Well, let her go. But I'm alone . ."

Úkhtishtcheff, swishing his slender cane, began to whistle, as he eyed his companion.

"How am I to live without her?" asked Fomá, staring at some point in front of him, and, after a pause, he answered himself softly and irresolutely:

"That's the way I feel about it . . ."

"Hearken to me!" exclaimed Úkhtishtcheff, "I'll give you some good advice; a man should be himself . . but you . . You're an epic man, so to speak, and the lyrical form doesn't suit you. It isn't your style."

"Try to use simpler language with me, master," said Fomá, after lending an attentive ear to his remarks.

"Simpler language? Very well. What I want to say is—stop thinking about that little lady. She's poisonous food for you."

"There now, she said the very same thing herself," interposed Fomá morosely.

"She did?" queried Úkhtishtcheff in turn, and became pensive.—"Hm. So that's the way the land lies! Shall not we go and sup?"

"Yes," assented Fomá, and suddenly thundered in exasperation, clenching his fists and brandishing them:

"All right, let's go! And when I get screwed up,—I'll break loose, after all this—look out!"

"But why? We'll sup modestly."

"No, hold on!" said Fomá anxiously, grasping him by the shoulder. "What's the meaning of it? Am I worse than other men? All live for themselves—they whirl, and bustle about, everyone has his own point . . But I'm bored. They're all satisfied with themselves—and when they complain—they lie, the rascals! I make no pretensions —I'm a fool. I understand nothing, my dear fellow,—I simply wish to live! I don't know how to think—I'm dis-

gusted . . . one person says this, another that. Pshaw! But she—ekh! You must know, that I trusted in her, I expected of her—what I expected of her, I don't know! But she—was the best of all. And I believed, that some day she would speak to me words of her own,—particular words—her eyes, my dear fellow were very fine! Heavens! I was ashamed to look into them. So, as I was saying—she would speak certain words to me,—she would explain everything to me. You see, I did not approach her with love, exactly—I went to her with all my soul—I sought—I thought, that if she was such a beauty, of course—therefore, I should become a man by her side!"

Úkhtishtcheff stared as this distressing, incoherent harangue burst from the mouth of his companion; he saw how the muscles of his face twitched with the effort to express his thoughts, and felt for this wild hubbub of words a great and serious pain. There was something profoundly touching in the powerlessness of this robust and savage young fellow, who suddenly began to walk along the sidewalk with long, uneven strides. As Úkhtishtcheff skipped along after him with his short legs, he felt himself bound to soothe Fomá by some means or other. Everything which Fomá had said and done that evening had aroused in the jolly secretary a great curiosity with regard to Fomá, and, moreover, he felt flattered by the frankness of the wealthy young man. This frankness confused him by its gloomy power, he was disconcerted by the shock of it, and although, despite his youth, he had cut and dried phrases for all the circumstances of life,—he could not lay his hand upon them promptly.

"I feel that things are dark and narrow," said Gordyéeff, "I feel that a burden is accumulating on my shoulders—but what it is, I can't understand. It impedes me, and

because of it, I can't get a real start in life. I listen to people, and they all say different things . . but she—might have told . ."

"Eh, my dear sir!" Úkhtishtcheff interrupted Fomá, taking him amiably by the arm.—"This won't do! You have only just entered on life, and—already you are philosophizing! No, it won't do at all! Life is given us for life! That means—live, and let live. There's philosophy for you! But that woman—bah! Isn't there anyone else in the world but her? If you like, I'll make you acquainted with such a virulent specimen that the next minute not a particle of your philosophy will be left in your soul! O, a re-e-ma-arkable little woman! And doesn't she understand how to make use of life! She, also, is somewhat in the epic line, you know. And handsome . . I may call her Phryne! And what a pair you and she would make! Ah, devil take it! But, really, it's a brilliant idea—I'll introduce you! We must make one nail drive out the other."

"I'm ashamed to," said Fomá, gruffly and sadly.—"As long as she is alive—I can't even look at women."

"Such a healthy, blooming man—ho-ho!" shouted Úkhtishtcheff, and in the tone of a tutor he began to argue with Fomá as to the indispensability of giving himself an outlet for his feelings in a good spree shared by women.

"It'll be magnificent, and it's indispensably necessary for you,—believe me! And as for your conscience—you must excuse me! You define it rather indefinitely—it isn't your conscience that hinders you, but—timidity, in my opinion. You live apart from society, you are shy—and awkward. You are dimly conscious of all this—and you mistake that consciousness for conscience. There can be no question of it in the matter in hand,—what has conscience to do with it, when jollification is so natural for a man, when it is his necessity and his right?"

Fomá walked on, moderating his pace to keep step with his companion's, and staring along the road. It ran between two rows of buildings, resembled a huge ditch, and was filled with gloom. It seemed as though there were no end to it, and far away something dark, inexhaustible, which stopped one's breath, were flowing slowly along it. Úkhtishtcheff's persuasively amiable voice rang monotonously in Fomá's ears, and, although he did not heed the words of the harangue, he was conscious that they were viscous, in a way, that they stuck to him, and he involuntarily stored them up in his memory. In spite of the fact that the man was walking beside him, he felt as though he were alone, lost in the darkness. The darkness held him in its embrace, and slowly drew him after it, and he felt that he was being drawn somewhither, and had no desire to hold himself back. A certain lassitude prevented his thinking, he had no desire to resist the admonitions of his companion,—and why should he resist them?

"It's not good for every man to argue," said Úkhtishtcheff, brandishing his cane in the air, and growing a little intoxicated with his own wisdom.—"And if everyone were to begin to argue—who would live? And they live only once. So there's no harm in being in a hurry to live; by heaven, that's a fact! But what's the use of talking—do you give me permission to shake you up? Let's go immediately to a gay house . . two sisters live there,—ah, how they live! Say the word!"

"Why not? I'll go," said Fomá calmly, with a yawn. "Isn't it late?" he asked, glancing at the cloud-covered sky.

"It's never too late to go to their house!" cried Úkhtishtcheff merrily.

VIII

On the third day after the scene in the Club, Fomá found himself seven versts from the town, on the lumber-wharf of merchant Zvántzeff, in the company of that merchant's son, of Úkhtishtcheff, a staid gentleman of noble birth with side-whiskers, a bald head, and a red nose, and of four ladies. Young Zvántzeff wore eyeglasses, was thin, pale, and when he was standing, the calves of his legs kept quivering, as though they found it repulsive to support the puny body, clad in a long, checked overcoat with a hood, among whose folds a little head in a jockey cap rattled round absurdly. The gentleman with the side-whiskers called him "Jean," and pronounced the name as though suffering from an inveterate cold in the head. Jean's lady was a tall, plump woman, with a splendid bust. Her head was compressed at the sides, her low brow receded, a long, sharp nose gave to her face a bird-like look. And this plain face was entirely immobile, and only the eyes—small, round, cold eyes—were constantly smiling with a piercing and cunning smile. Úkhtishtcheff's lady was named Véra; she was a tall, pale woman, with red hair. She had so much hair, that it seemed as though the woman had put a huge cap on her head, which was sinking down over her ears, her cheeks and her lofty brow, from beneath which her large blue eyes gazed out calmly and indolently.

The gentleman with the side-whiskers was sitting beside a young, plump, blooming girl, who laughed incessantly and resonantly at what he was whispering in her ear, as he bent over her shoulder.

Fomá's lady was a graceful brunette, dressed entirely in black. Swarty of complexion, with wavy hair, she held her head so straight and so loftily, and gazed at everything around her in so haughtily-condescending a manner, that it was immediately obvious that she considered herself the chief person present.

The party had disposed themselves on the last link of the raft, which extended far out into the smooth, empty expanse of the river. There was a flooring of planks over the raft; and in the centre of the raft, stood a roughly made table, and everywhere about were scattered empty bottles, provision-baskets confectionery-wrappers, orange-skins. On one corner of the raft was strewn a pile of earth; upon this burned a fire of logs, and a peasant, in a short fur-coat was squatting on his heels, warming his hands over the fire, and casting furtive glances in the direction of his employers, who were sitting round the table. The latter had just finished eating their sterlet soup, and now wine and fruit stood on the table before them.

Fatigued with their forty-eight-hour debauch, and with the dinner they had just finished, the party were in a bored state of mind. All were gazing at the river and talking, but the conversation was constantly interrupted by long pauses. The day was bright, and, after the fashion of spring, robustly-young. The coldly-clear sky spread majestically over the turbid water of the gigantically-wide river at its flood, calm as the heaven and immense as the sea. The far-off hill-shore was caressingly enveloped in a bluish, smoke-like haze, and through it, yonder, on the crest of the ridge, glittered the crosses of the churches, like large stars. The river was animated in the vicinity of the hill-shore [1]—

[1] The "hill-shore" of the Vólga is the west shore, on which lies Nízhni-Nóvgorod, the (probable) scene of this story. The "forest-

steamers were moving to and fro, and their noise was wafted, in ponderous sobs, to the rafts, in the meadows, where the gentle current of the waves filled the air with soft, timid sounds. Huge barges which were being towed, one after the other, against the current, like pigs of enormous size, ploughed up the smooth surface of the river. The black smoke crept, in heavy puffs, from the funnels of the steamers, and melted slowly away in the fresh air, filled with brilliant sunlight . . From time to time a whistle shrieked,—as though some huge beast were raging and roaring, angered by its toil. And in the meadows, round about the rafts, everything was calm and quiet. Isolated trees, submerged by the spring-flood, were already covered with brilliantly-green spangles of leaves. The water, which covered their roots, and reflected their crests, rendered them spherical,—and it seemed as though, at the slightest puff of the breeze, they would float away, in their fantastic beauty, along the mirror-like bosom of the river.

The red-haired woman, gazing pensively into the distance, began to sing, softly and mournfully:

> "Adown the Vólga ri-iver,
> The light boat flo-oats a-long." . .

The brunette, narrowing her large, stern eyes disdainfully, said, without looking at her:

"We're bored enough without that."

"Don't touch her—let her sing!" entreated Fomá, good-naturedly, as he gazed into his lady's face. He was pale, sparks of some sort had blazed up in his eyes, and an uncertain, indolent smile hovered on his lips.

shore," or eastern shore, is flat and wooded, and not very animated near Nízhni.—*Translator.*

"Let's sing in chorus!" suggested the gentleman with the side-whiskers.

"No, let those two sing!" cried Úkhtishtcheff with animation.—"Véra, sing that song—you know which? 'I will go at the break of day,'—how does it run? Sing, Pávlinka!"

The giggler glanced at the brunette, and inquired respectfully:

"Shall we sing, Sásha?"

"I'll sing myself," announced Fomá's friend, and, turning to the lady with the bird-like face, she gave the command:

"Vássa, sing with me!"

The latter immediately broke off her conversation with Zvántzeff, stroked her throat with her hand, and rivetted her round eyes on her sister's face. Sásha rose to her feet, rested her hand on the table, and proudly raising her head, she began, in a strong, almost masculine voice, to declaim melodiously:

"He liveth well upon the earth,
Who hath no petty cares,
In the ardent heart of his lady-love!"

Her sister rocked her head, and in wailing, long-drawn tones, she moaned in a high contralto:

"Ehk-with-me-with-the-maid-so-fair."

With a flash of her eyes at her sister, Sásha cried, in low-pitched notes:

"My heart is high, as a blade of gra-a-ass!"

The two voices united, and floated over the water in

beautiful, succulent sounds, quivering with excess of power. One complained of the unbearable pain in her heart, and slaking her thirst with the poison of her plaint,—sobbed with mournful and impotent grief, sobbed, extinguishing the fire of her torments with tears. The other, lower and more masculine,—rolled out powerfully on the air, filled with the feeling of bloody insult, and readiness to take vengeance. Clearly enunciating the words, the voice burst from the breast in a thick stream, and every word reeked with boiling blood, stirred to revolt by outrage, poisoned by insult, and clamoring mightily for revenge.

"For this I will requite him" . .

sang Vássa plaintively, closing her eyes.

"I'll fre-ee-eze him out, I'll dry-y-y him out,"

promised Sásha, confidently and menacingly, tossing into the air robust, powerful notes, which resembled blows. And, all of a sudden, altering the tempo of the song, and elevating her voice, in the same long-drawn tone as her sister, she struck into sensual and exultant threats:

"Drier than the wind, the tempestuous wi-ind,
Drier than the grass that is mo-own down,
Oï, that is mo-own and is fully dri-ied. ."

Fomá, his elbows resting on the table, bent down his head, and with frowning brows, gazed into the face of the woman, into her black, half-closed eyes. Rivetted upon some point in the distance, they sparkled so wickedly and brilliantly, that from their gleam the velvety voice which poured forth from the woman's breast seemed to him to be

black and sparkling also, like her eyes. He recalled her caresses, and thought:

"And whence comes she, such a woman? One is even afraid with her."

Úkhtishtcheff, sitting close to his lady, with a beatific expression on his face, listened to the song, and beamed all over with delight. The gentleman with the side-whiskers and Zvántzeff drank wine, and softly whispered together about something, bending toward each other. The red-haired woman pensively scrutinized the palm of Úkhtishtcheff's hand, which she held in her hands, and the merry young girl became melancholy, drooped her head, and listened to the song without moving, as though fascinated by it. The peasant quitted the fire. He stepped cautiously over the planks, standing on tiptoe, his hands were clasped behind his back, but his broad, bearded face was transfigured by a smile of amazement, and of some ingenuous joy.

"Ekh . . now feel thou, kind young man!"

mournfully implored Vássa, shaking her head. And her sister, in exulting and powerful tones, swelling out her bosom, and tossing her head still higher, concluded the song:

"What is the anguish of lo-o-ove!"

When she finished singing, she looked around, and dropping down beside Fomá, threw her strong, firm arm about his neck in an embrace.

"Well, was the song nice?"

"Splendid!" sighed Fomá, smiling at her.

The song had inspired in his heart a thirst for caresses, and it quivered, still filled as it was with the beautiful

sounds, but at the touch of her arm, he felt awkward and ashamed before the other people.

"Bravo-o! Bravo, Alexándra Savélievna!" shouted Úkhtishtcheff, and all the others clapped their hands. But she paid no attention to them, and embracing Fomá, she said, authoritatively:

"Come now, give me something for the song."

"All right, I will," assented Fomá.

"What?"

"Tell me what it is to be."

"I'll tell you in town . . . And if you give me what I want,—oh, how I will love you, Fomá!"

"For the gift?" asked Fomá, with an incredulous smile. "You'd better simply . ."

She glanced composedly at him, and after meditating for a second, she said, with decision:

"'Tis early in the day to do it simply. I will not lie, and what's the use of lying with you! I say straight out, that I love for money, for gifts. Because men have nothing but money. They can give nothing but money—nothing of any worth. You see, I know . . One can love in that way,—yes. Wait, I'll keep watch of you, and perhaps I shall be able to love you without pay. But, in the meantime, don't condemn me unheard . . . in my way of life, I need a great deal of money."

Fomá listened to her, smiled and trembled at the proximity of her robust, graceful body. Zvántzeff's sour, cracked and wearisome voice smote upon his ear:

"I don't like, I can't understand, the beauties of these renowned Russian folk-songs. What do they sound like, hey? The howl of a wolf—something hungry and savage. It's—like a sick dog—beastly altogether. There's nothing cheerful about it,—there's no *chic* about it,—there are no

live and enlivening sounds. No, you just ought to hear how the French peasant sings . . ah! Or, the Italian."

"How can you say so, Iván Nikoláevitch," shouted Úkhtishtcheff in perturbation.

"I must agree with that—Russian singing is monotonous and lacking in brilliancy . . . it has none of that polish of culture, you know," said the man with the side-whiskers, sadly, as he sipped wine out of a drinking-glass.

"On the other hand, the living heart is always in it," interposed the red-haired woman, as she peeled an orange.

The sun set. As it sank far away, beyond the forest, on the meadow-shore, it dyed all the woods with hues of crimson, and cast upon the cold, dark water, rose-colored and golden spots. Fomá glanced in that direction, at this play of the sun's rays, watched them stream palpitatingly over the quiet, level waste of waters, and as his ear caught snatches of the conversation, he pictured them to himself as a swarm of dark-hued butterflies fluttering restlessly in the air. Sásha, leaning her head on his shoulder, made, straight into his ear, soft remarks, which caused him to grow red and confused, for he felt that they were again arousing within him the desire to clasp the woman in a strong embrace, and shower on her kisses without number, unweariedly. No one of the people there assembled together interested him, save her. Zvántzeff and the gentleman were downright repulsive to him.

"What are you gaping at?" he heard Úkhtishtcheff's jestingly-severe exclamation.

Úkhtishtcheff was shouting at the peasant. The latter plucked his cap from his head, slapped it against his knee, and replied, with a smile:

"I—came nearer to listen to the lady."

"Why, does she sing well?"

"What's the need of saying it!" said the peasant, gazing at Sásha, with rapture-filled eyes.

"Exactly so!" cried Úkhtishtcheff.

"There's gre-eat power of voice in her breast," said the peasant, shaking his head.

His words evoked the laughter of the ladies, and among the men, ambiguous remarks about Sásha.

After she had listened to them with composure, and replied to them by not one word, she asked the peasant:

"Do you sing?"

"Don't I!" and he waved his hand.

"What songs do you know?"

"Why, all sorts . . I'm fond of singing."

He grinned, in an apologetic sort of way.

"Suppose you sing with me."

"What's the use! Are we mates?"

"Come, begin!"

"But may I sit down?"

"Come hither, to the table."

"How jolly this is!" exclaimed Zvántzeff, wrinkling up his visage.

"If you find it tiresome—go drown yourself," said Sásha, flashing her eyes at him.

"No, the water is cold," retorted Zvántzeff, shrivelling up under her glance.

"As you like!" and the woman shrugged her shoulders. "But it's time you did it, and there's a lot of water just now, so that you wouldn't spoil it all with your rotten carcass."

"Fie, how witty!" hissed the young man, turning away from her, and he said with disdain: "In Russia, even the cocottes are coarse."

He addressed himself to his neighbor, but the latter an-

swered him only with a drunken smile. Úkhtishtcheff, also, was drunk. Gazing, with owlish eyes into the face of his lady, he was muttering something, and heard nothing. The lady with the bird-like face was pecking at the confectionery, holding the box right under her nose. Pávlinka had strolled off to the edge of the raft, and stood there, tossing orange-peel into the water.

"I never before took part in such a stupid spree—with such a stupid party," said Zvántzeff plaintively to his neighbor.

But Fomá watched him with a grin, and was delighted that this puny, homely man was bored, and that Sásha had insulted him. He gazed caressingly and approvingly at his friend,—it pleased him that she talked with everyone so directly, and bore herself proudly, like a real gentlewoman.

The peasant seated himself on the planks at her feet, clasped his knees in his arms, raised his face toward her, and listened gravely to her remarks.

"Elevate your voice when I lower mine—do you understand?"

"Yes—but—madam? You might treat me to a drink, to screw up my courage?!"

"Fomá, give him a glass of liquor."

And when the peasant, after drinking, had grunted with satisfaction, licked his lips and said: "Now I can sing," . . she commanded, with a frown:

"Begin."

Twisting his mouth on one side and raising his eyes to her face, the peasant struck up, in a high tenor voice:

"I cannot dri-ink and, ekh, I cannot-e-e-eat."

Quivering all over, the woman wailed tremulously and with terrifying mournfulness:

"Wine will not my spii-irit soo-oothe!"

The peasant smiled delightedly, wagged his head, and closing his eyes, poured forth upon the air, a vibrating stream of high notes:

"O-ë, the time has come for me to say fa-are-we-ell."

But the woman, trembling and writhing, moaned and wept:

"Oï, from my—ki-ins-fo-olk I must pa-art."

Lowering his voice, and swaying to and fro, the peasant half-sang, half-declaimed, with amazingly forceful expression of woe:

"Ekh, and to a pla-ace that is strange I needs must go."

When the two voices, sobbing and moaning, mingled together, in the silence and freshness of the evening, everything round about seemed to grow warmer and better; everything seemed to be smiling with a smile of compassion on the anguish of the man whom a dark power wrenches from his natal nest into some strange place, to onerous toil and humiliation. They seemed to be not sounds, or a song, but the burning tears of a human heart in which this plaint boiled up,—and these tears bedewed the air. Mad grief and pain from the ulcers of soul and body, tortured in the struggle with life's harshness, profound sufferings from wounds dealt to man by the iron hand of want,—all this was contained in the simple, rough words, and was expressed by the ineffably melancholy sounds to the far-off, empty sky, which had no echo for anybody or anything.

Retreating somewhat from the singers, Fomá gazed at

them with a feeling akin to terror, but the song poured into his breast in a seething flood, and the fierce power of sadness which it held within it, gripped his heart to the point of anguish. He felt that tears were ready to well forth from his breast, there was a tickling in his throat, and his face twitched. He dimly perceived Sásha's black eyes—motionless and sparkling gloomily, they looked to him immense and grew larger and larger. And it seemed to him that it was not two persons who were singing—but that everything around him was singing and sobbing, quivering and shaking in torments of grief, straining somewhither, gushing with burning tears, and every living thing was clasped in one mighty embrace of despair. He himself was singing with all the rest—with the people, the river, and the distant shore, whence wafted heavy sighs which mingled with the song.

Now the peasant rose to his knees, and gazing at Sásha, waved his arms, and she bent down to him, and rocked her head, keeping time with the beats of his hands. Both were singing now without words, with sounds alone, and Fomá still could not believe that only two throats were pouring forth upon the air with such power those groans and sobs. When they had finished singing, he stared at them quivering with excitement, his face wet with tears, and smiled piteously.

"Well—did it affect you?" asked Sásha. Pale with fatigue, she was breathing hard and fast. Fomá glanced at the peasant. The latter was mopping his perspiring brow, and gazing about him with abstracted eyes, as though he did not understand what had happened.

Silence reigned. Everyone sat motionless, speechless.

"Akh, Lord!" sighed Fomá, rising to his feet.—"Ekh, Sásha! Peasant! Who are you?" he almost screamed.

"Why, I am Stepán," said the peasant with a confused smile, and rose to his feet also. "I'm Stepán, of course."

"How you sing! Ah!" exclaimed Fomá in amazement, shifting uneasily from foot to foot.

"E-ekh, Your Honor!" sighed the peasant, and added softly, impressively: "Grief makes the ox sing like the nightingale . . But why this lady sings like that—God only knows . . but she sings—with all her sinews—that is to say—it's enough to make one lie down and die with sadness! We-ell, my lady!"

"Very well sung!" said Úkhtishtcheff, in a drunken voice.

"No, it—the devil knows what it was like!" Zvántzeff suddenly shouted irritably, and almost with tears, jumping up from the table.—"I came off here for a spree—I want to be jolly, and they sing funeral chants over my dead body! It's downright indecent! I won't stand any more of it—I'll go away!"

"Jean! I'm going too—I'm bored also," announced the gentleman with the side-whiskers.

"Vássa!" shouted Zvántzeff to his lady.—"Dress yourself!"

"Yes, it's time to go," Úkhtishtcheff's red-haired lady said softly to him. "It's cold—and it will soon be dark."

"Stepán! get things together!" ordered Vássa.

All bustled about, all began to chatter about something or other; Fomá gazed at them with wondering eyes, and continued to tremble. The people walked about the raft, reeling as they went, pale, exhausted, and talked stupidly, incoherently to each other. Sásha jostled them unceremoniously as she gathered up her things.

"Stepán! Call for the horses!"

"But I—I'm going to have another drink of brandy—

who wants to drink with me?" drawled the gentleman with the side-whiskers in a beatific voice, clutching a bottle in his hands.

Vássa wrapped Zvántzeff's neck in a scarf. He stood before her, with his lips fantastically thrust out, all scowling and dissatisfied, and his calves waggled. Fomá was seized with disgust at the sight of them, and went off to another raft. He was astonished that all these people should behave thus, as though they had not heard the song. In his breast it still lived, and stirred to life within it an uneasy longing to do something, to talk about something. But there was no one for him to talk with.

The sun had already set, and the distance was enveloped in a blue mist. Fomá looked in that direction, and turned away. He did not wish to return to the town with these people, and remain here with them he would not. But they were all strolling about the raft with unsteady feet, staggering from side to side and muttering incoherent words. The women were more sober than the men; only the red-haired woman was not able to rise from the bench for a long time, and at last, when she did stand up, she announced:

"Well, I'm drunk."

Fomá seated himself on a block of timber, and picking up the axe with which the peasant had chopped up the wood for the fire, began to play with it, tossing it into the air and catching it.

"Akh, my God, how insipid this is!" rang out Zvántzeff's whimsical exclamation. Fomá felt that he hated him—him, and all of them, except Sásha, who aroused in him a certain dim sensation which contained both admiration for her, and dread that she might do something unexpected and strange.

"You be-east!" shouted Zvántzeff shrilly, and Fomá saw him deal the peasant a blow on the chest, after which the peasant pulled off his cap apologetically, and stepped aside.

"Foo-ol!" screamed Zvántzeff, striding after him and brandishing his arm.

Fomá sprang to his feet, and said threateningly:

"Hold on there! Don't touch him!"

"Wha-at?" And Zvántzeff turned toward him.

"Stepán, come here!" called Fomá.

"Peasant!" screamed Zvántzeff scornfully, staring at Fomá.

Fomá elevated his shoulders, and strode toward him.—And, all at once, an idea flashed brilliantly into his head. He gave vent to a malicious laugh, and asked Stepán in an undertone:

"The string of rafts is moored in three places, isn't it?"

"Exactly so."

"Cut the connections."

"And they?"

"Hold your tongue! Cut away."

"But . ."

"Cut! Quietly, so that they may not notice it."

The peasant took the axe, and leisurely approached the spot where the link was stoutly fastened to another link, and dealt several blows, then turned to Fomá.

"I'm not responsible, your Honor," he said.

"Have no fear."

"They've started," whispered the peasant in alarm, hastily making the sign of the cross. But Fomá watched, laughing softly, and experienced a painful sensation, which titillated his heart keenly and ardently with a strange, sweet, agreeable terror. The people on the raft were still strolling

about, moving slowly, knocking against each other, helping the ladies to don their wraps, laughing and chatting, while the raft was turning softly, irresolutely in the water.

"If the current carries them on to the caravan," whispered the peasant, "they'll get stove in on the bow—it will smash them into splinters . ."

"Hold your tongue."

"They'll drown . ."

"You'll launch a boat, and overtake them."

"That's right! Thank you! And if not, what then? They're human beings, after all. And we're responsible for them . . ." The peasant, content now, and laughing gaily, dashed in leaps across the rafts to the shore. But Fomá stood over the water, and felt a passionate desire to shout something, but he restrained himself, anxious to have the raft float as far off as possible, so that those drunken people would not be able to jump across and join him on the link which was still moored. He experienced an agreeable, soothing sensation as he saw the raft rocking gently on the water, and moving farther and farther from him every moment.

In company with the people on the raft, and forth from his breast seemed to float that dark, heavy something which had filled it all this time. He calmly inhaled the cool air, and with it something healthy which sobered his brain. On the very edge of the departing raft stood Sásha, with her back toward Fomá; he gazed after her fine figure, and involuntarily the memory of Madame Medýnsky recurred to his mind. She was not so tall . . The recollection of her gave him a pang, and he shouted, in a loud, sneering tone:

"Hey there, you! Good-bye! Ha, ha, ha!"

The dark figures of the people suddenly and all together moved toward him, and assembled in a cluster, in the mid-

dle of the raft. But between them and Fomá a strip of water nearly a fathom in width already gleamed coldly. The silence lasted for several seconds.

And all at once, a whole hurricane of shrill sounds was wafted to Fomá,—sounds full of animal terror, repulsively-reproachful; and high above all and more repelling to the ear than all the rest, Zvántzeff's shrill, quavering cry pierced the ear:

"He-elp!"

Someone—it must have been the solid man with the side-whiskers,—roared in a bass voice:

"Drowning—people drowning."

"Are you people?!" shouted Fomá spitefully, irritated by the shrieks, which seemed to bite him.

But the people flung themselves about the raft, in mad terror; it rocked under their feet, and in consequence, floated more swiftly, and the agitated water could be heard splashing over it, and dashing under it. Cries rent the air, the people leaped about, flourished their hands, and only Sásha's graceful figure stood motionless and silent on the edge of the raft.

"Give my compliments to the crawfishes!" shouted Fomá. —He grew more and more light-hearted and merry, in proportion as the raft floated farther away.

"Fomá Ignátievitch!" began Úkhtishtcheff, in an irresolute but sober tone, "see here, this is a dangerous joke. I shall complain . ."

"When you're drowned? Complain away!" replied Fomá cheerfully.

"You're a murderer . ." shouted Zvántzeff, with a sob. But at that moment the sonorous plash of the water resounded, as though it were exclaiming with fear or with wonder. Then the wild, intoxicated shrieks of women rang

out, and the terror-stricken exclamations of the men, and all the figures on the raft fell silent, each where it stood. And Fomá, as he stared at the water, felt as though he had turned to stone,—but across the water something black, surrounded by splashings, came floating toward him.

Instinctively rather than consciously, Fomá threw himself breast down upon the beams of the raft, and stretched his arms out in front of him, with his head suspended over the water. Several incredibly long seconds elapsed. Cold wet hands clasped his neck, and dark eyes flashed before him. Then he understood that it was Sásha.

The dull terror which had suddenly overpowered him vanished, and was replaced by wild, rebellious joy. He seized the woman round the waist, tore her from the water, pressed her to his breast, and knowing not what to say to her, gazed wonderingly into her eyes. They smiled caressingly upon him . .

"I'm cold," said Sásha softly, and shivered all over.

Fomá laughed happily at the sound of her voice, tossed her into his arms, and set out hastily, almost at a run, across the raft to the shore. She was as wet and cold as a fish, but her breath was burning, it scorched Fomá's cheek, and filled his breast with tempestuous delight.

"Did you want to drown me?" she said, pressing close to him. "'Tis early yet—wait."

"How well you did that," muttered Fomá as he ran. "You daring woman!"

"Well, it wasn't a bad invention on your part—though you are such a—peaceable—person in appearance."

"And the rest—they're still all howling, ha, ha!"

"Devil take them! If they drown, you and I shall go to Siberia, . ." said the woman, exactly as though she was desirous, by these words, to comfort and encourage him.

She began to shiver, and the tremor of her body, which Fomá felt, made him hasten his flight.

Yells and cries for help were wafted after them from the river. There, on the tranquil water, getting farther and farther from shore toward the main current of the river, a small islet was floating through the gloom, and upon it dark human figures were rushing back and forth.

Night closed in upon them.

IX

On a certain Sunday, at noon, Pákoff Tarásovitch Mayákin was drinking tea in his garden, and chatting with his daughter. Having unbuttoned the collar of his shirt, and wound a towel round his neck, he was sitting on a bench under a canopy of green cherry-trees, flourishing his hands in the air, wiping the perspiration from his face, and sprinkling the air with his brisk remarks in an incessant stream.

"The man who permits his belly to have dominion over him is both a fool and a knave! Isn't there anything better in the world than drinking and gobbling? On what are you to pride yourself before people, if you are such a hog?"

The old man's eyes glistened with vexation and spite, his lips were scornfully contorted, and the wrinkles on his dark visage quivered.

"If Fomá were only my own son, I'd teach him a lesson!"

Playing with a branch of acacia, Liubóff listened in silence to her father's harangue, gazing attentively and searchingly at his agitated, trembling face. As she grew older, she had, unconsciously to herself, altered her cold and distrustful demeanor toward the old man. Ever more frequently did she detect in his words the same idea that was in her books, and this influenced her in favor of her father, involuntarily causing the girl to prefer his lively speeches to the cold letters in her books. Always overwhelmed with business, always audacious and clever, he pursued his

path alone, but she perceived his loneliness, knew how heavy it was, and her relations to her father became warmer. At times, even, she entered into discussions with the old man; he always bore himself toward her retorts, with disdain and ridicule, but with every succeeding occasion, he became more attentive and gentler.

"If the deceased Ignát could read in the newspapers about his son's indecent life—he'd kill his Fómka!" said Mayákin, bringing his fist down with a bang upon the table. "You see how he is described? It's disgraceful!"

"He deserves it!" said Liubóff.

"I don't say it's done at random! They have barked as was proper. And who found it out?"

"Does it make any difference to you?" asked the girl.

"I'm curious to know. That sharp fellow described Fomá's behavior adroitly. Evidently he himself had been on the spree with him, and was a witness to all his outrageous conduct."

"Oh, come now, he won't go on sprees with Fomá!" said Liubóff with conviction, and blushed deeply beneath her father's searching glance.

"Won't he! A nice sort of acquaintance you have, Liúbka!" said Mayákin, with humorous malice. "Come now, who wrote that?"

"Why do you wish to know, papa?"

"Never mind, tell me!"

She did not wish to tell, but her father insisted, and his voice grew more and more dry and wrathful. Then she asked him anxiously:

"But you will not do anything to him?"

"I? I'll—bite his head off! The big fo-ool! What can I do to him? These writers are anything but a stupid lot,

and therefore, they are a power,—a power, the devils! But I'm not the Governor,—and even he can't dislocate the man's arm or tie up his tongue. They're like mice,—they gnaw us away little by little,—and you have to hunt them, not with pointed sticks, but with rubles . . . so there now! Come, then, who is he?"

"Do you remember, that when I was at school, a gymnasium student, Ezhóff, used to come to our house? A swarthy little fellow . ."

"Mm—I used to see him, of course! I know . . So it's he?"

"Yes."

"The miserable little mouse! Even at that time it was plain that he would turn out badly . . Even at that time, he was a nuisance. A nasty, bold little brat. I ought to have taken him in hand then—perhaps I might have made a man of him."

Liubóff broke into a malicious laugh, and glancing at her father, she asked hotly:

"And isn't a person who writes for the newspapers a man?"

For a long time, the old man made no reply to his daughter, but drummed thoughtfully on the table with his fingers, and stared at his own face, which was reflected in the brightly polished copper of the samovár. Then, raising his head, and screwing up his eyes, he said impressively, in a passion:

"Those people are not men—they're ulcers! The blood in Russians has become mixed, it has become mixed and spoiled, and from this bad blood have sprung all these dirty little writers of books and newspapers, savage pharisees. They've broken out everywhere, and they keep on breaking out, more and more. What does this corruption of the

blood come from? From sluggishness of motion . . . Whence come mosquitoes, for example? From the swamps. All sorts of filth is bred in stagnant water. And it's the same with ill-ordered lives."

"You're not talking sense, papa!" said Liubóff gently.

"What's that—not talking sense?"

"Writers are the most disinterested of men—they are brilliant individualities! For, you see, they want nothing—all they demand is justice . . truth! They are not mosquitoes!"

Liubóff grew excited, as she lauded the men she so loved; her face flushed crimson, and her eyes gazed at her father as though she were entreating him to believe her, though she was not capable of convincing him.

"E-ekh, you goose!" said the old man with a sigh, interrupting her. "You've read too much! You've poisoned yourself! Now tell me—who are they? Nobody knows! There's Ezhóff—what's he? The Lord our God only knows—bah! All they demand is truth, you say? How modest they are?! And is truth the most precious thing of all? Perhaps everyone is seeking it silently, how do you know? Believe me—there can be no such thing as a disinterested man—no one will fight for another man's property—but if he does, his name is 'fool,' and he's of no use to anybody! A man must know how to stand up for himself, for his own nearest interests—then he'll make something of himself! There you have it! 'tis true! I've been reading the same newspaper for forty years, and I see—here's my face before you, and before me, yonder, on the samovár, is my face again, but it's different . . . Those newspapers give a samovár-face to everybody, and they don't see the real one . . . But you believe them . . But I know that my face in the samovár is disfigured. No one ought to speak

the actual truth; a man's gullet is too delicate for that—yes, and nobody knows the real truth."

"Papa!" exclaimed Liubóff.—"But, you know, books and newspapers defend the general interests, and all men."

"And in what newspaper is it written that you find life tiresome, and that you ought to have got married long ago? So there now,—they don't defend your interest! Plague on you! And they don't defend mine, either—who knows what I want? Who, save myself, understands what my interests are?"

"No, papa, that's not it, still, not it at all! I cannot answer you properly, but I feel that it is not so!" said Liubóff, almost in despair.

"It is so, exactly!" said the old man firmly. "Russia has got all stirred up, and there's nothing steady in it; everything is tottering! Everybody is living with their hats cocked on one ear, they walk on one side, there's no symmetry in life. Only, everybody is yelling in a different voice. And what this man or that man wants,—no one understands! There's a fog over everything—everybody inhales the fog, and that's why people's blood has become tainted . . that's why there are ulcers. Great liberty of reasoning has been granted to men, but they're not allowed to do anything—hence a man does not live, but rots and stinks."

"What ought one to do?" asked Liubóff, placing her elbows on the table, and bending toward her father.

"Everything!" shouted the old man passionately.—"Do everything! Drive ahead, each one in the thing he's clever at! But for that, people must be given freedom—complete freedom! So long as the time has come when every greenhorn assumes about himself that he can do everything, and

was created for making a complete disposition of life,—why, give the mad scape-grace freedom! Come on, live! A-a! Then this is the comedy which will follow; when the man feels that the bit has been taken off him, he'll kick up higher than his ears, and will flutter about, hither and thither, like a feather. He'll imagine he's a miracle-worker, and he'll begin to let out his spirit . . ."

The old man paused, and with a spiteful smile, lowering his voice, he continued:

"But the spirit of that same organizer is a ve-ery small quantity indeed within him! He'll puff himself up for a day or two, he'll spread himself out on all sides, and pretty soon he'll weaken, the poor wretch! His heart is rotten within him, he-he-he! The-en, he-he-he!—the real, worthy people will understand him, the dear man,—the worthy people who are able to be the real civilian masters of life, . . who will direct life not with a cudgel, not with the pen, but with a finger and with brains! What,—they will say—are the gentlemen weary? What, they will say, doesn't his spleen stand real heat? Ye-es, sir!" And elevating his head, the old man concluded his harangue in a domineering tone:

"Well, now then you Thus-and-So,—hold your tongues, don't utter a squeak! If you do, we'll shake you off the earth, as worms are shaken from a tree! Hus-s-sh, my dears! He-he-he! That's the way it will turn out, Liubávka!"

The old man was merry. His wrinkles twitched, and, intoxicated with his own eloquence, he trembled all over, closed his eyes, and smacked his lips, as though savoring his own wisdom . .

"Well, and then those who will get the upper hand in the turmoil will arrange life after their own fashion, sensi-

bly. Business won't go by fits and starts then, but as if by note. I shall not live to see that time, more's the pity!"

Upon Liubóff her father's words fell, one after the other, like meshes in some vast, strong net,—fell, entangling her, and the girl, not knowing how to free herself from them, remained silent, stunned by her father's speech. As she stared at his face with an intent gaze she sought a support for herself in his words, and heard in them something which bore a general resemblance to what she had read in books, and to what seemed to her the real truth. But her father's malevolent, triumphant laughter wounded her heart, and those wrinkles which crept across his face like tiny, dark-hued serpents, inspired her with a sort of fear for herself in his presence. She felt that he was turning her aside from that which, in her dreams, had seemed to her so simple and brilliant.

"Papa!" she suddenly asked the old man, obeying an idea and a desire which unexpectedly flashed across her,—"Papa! But what, in your opinion,—what is Tarás?"

Mayákin shuddered. His brows contracted wrathfully, he fixed his keen little eyes intently on his daughter's countenance, and drily asked her:

"What sort of talk is this?"

"Is it possible that he must not be mentioned?" said Liubóff softly and confusedly.

"I don't want to talk about him, and I advise you not to!" . . the old man shook his finger menacingly at his daughter, and with a gloomy frown, dropped his head. But, in saying that he did not wish to talk about his son, it must have been that he did not thoroughly understand himself, for after a momentary silence, he began again, surlily and angrily:

"Taráska is an ulcer also . . Life breathes upon you

young simpletons, but you are not able to pick out its genuine odors, and you swallow all sorts of trash, and that's where the muddiness in your pates comes from. And that's why you are incapable of anything, and are unhappy because of your incapacity . . . Taráska . . . ye-es! He's about forty years old now,—he's dead to me! A convict—is that a son for me? A blunt-snouted pig, who wouldn't talk to his father, and—tripped up."

"What did he do?" asked Liubóff, listening eagerly to the old man's remarks.

"Who knows? In all probability, he can't understand it himself now,—if he has become sensible. And he ought to have become a pretty clever fellow—he's the son of anything but a stupid father . . . and he has suffered not a little. They coddle them, the nihilists. I'd give it to them—I'd show them what business means. Into the desert! Into the desert places, forward, march! Come, now, you clever fellows, arrange life here according to your character. Come on! And as chiefs over them, I'd put stout peasants. Now then, my honorable gentlemen, you've been given drink, and food and education,—let's see what you have learned? A little debt, if you please . . We-ell, I wouldn't spend a broken copper for them, but I'd squeeze all the juice out of them,—yield it up! A man must not be neglected; it's not enough to put him in prison! You've transgressed the law, and are of noble birth? Never mind, you just work for me. From one grain a whole ear springs, and a man must not be permitted to perish without profit! An economical carpenter will find a place in the work for every chip,—and just so, every man ought to be used with profit for the job, and entirely, down to his very last sinew. Every sort of trash has its place in life, and a man is never trash . . Ekh! It's bad when strength exists without

sense, and it's not good when there is sense but no strength. There's Fómka, now . . Look out and see who's crawling along there?"

Turning round, Liubóff perceived that Efím, the captain of the "Yermák," was walking along one of the garden paths, and was bowing to her, having respectfully removed his cap. His face was desperately guilty, and he seemed to be bruised all over. Yákoff Tarásovitch recognized him, and instantly becoming uneasy, he shouted:

"Whence come you? What has happened?"

"So I have come to you!" said Efím, with a low bow, coming to a halt at the table.

"Well, I see that you have come to me . . What's the matter? Where's the steamer?"

"The steamer is yonder!" Efím thrust his hand out into the air, and shifted heavily from one foot to the other.

"Where, you devil? Tell me coherently, what has happened?" roared the old man, with an angry scream.

"So—a misfortune, Yákoff . ."

"Have you been smashed up?"

"No, God saved us . ."

"Have you been burned up? Come, speak up quickly."

Efím inhaled a large quantity of air, and said slowly:

"Barge No. 9 has gone to the bottom,—broken up. One man had his spine broken, another is not to be found, so he is probably drowned. Five more men were hurt, but not so very badly . . . though several are pretty thoroughly spoiled . . ."

"You don't say so!" drawled Mayákin, measuring the captain ominously with his eyes. "We-ell now, Efímushka, I'll flay you alive."

"I didn't do it!" said Efím hastily.

"You didn't?" shouted the old man, shaking all over. "Who did?"

"The master himself."

"Fómka?! And you . . what were you doing?"

"I—was lying under the hatchway."

"A-a! You were ly-ing . ."

"I was bound."

"Wha-at!" squealed the old man, in his thin voice.

"Permit me to tell you in proper order.—He had been drinking, and he shouted: 'Begone! I'll take command myself!'—I said—'I can't! As I'm the captain—'—'Bind him!' said he. And when they had bound me, they put me under the hatches, with the sailors.—But as he was drunk, he wanted to joke. A string of boats was coming toward us—six empty barges towed by the 'Tchernigóretz.' Fomá Ignátievitch barred their way. They whistled,—more than once,—I must tell the truth, they whistled . ."

"We-ll?"

"Well, and they didn't get straightened out . . the two barges in front ran into us. As they crushed in the side of our ninth . . we were smashed to flinders. Both of them were smashed, but we had much worse luck than they did."

Mayákin rose from the table, and broke out into a quavering, malicious laugh. But Efím sighed, and throwing out his hands, he said:

"He has a very strong character. When he's sober, he's silent most of the time, and goes about thoughtfully, but when he wets his springs with liquor,—he gets wound up. Thus, at that moment, he was master neither of himself nor of the business in hand, but a savage enemy—begging your pardon! And I want to leave, Yákoff Tarásovitch! I'm not used to being without a master, I can't live without a master."

"Hold your tongue!" said Mayákin gruffly.—"Where is Fomá?"

"There, on the spot. Immediately after the affair, he came to himself, and sent for workmen. They are going to raise the barge . . probably they have already brought it to land."

"Is he alone there?" asked Mayákin, dropping his head.

"Not—entirely," replied Efím in an undertone, with a sidelong glance at Liubóff.

"Well?"

"He has a lady with him—a swarthy sort of . ."

"Just so."

"The woman doesn't seem to have quite all her wits," said Efím, with a sigh.—"She's eternally singing—she sings very well—it's a great scandal."

"I'm not asking you about her!" roared Mayákin viciously. The wrinkles on his face knit together in a painful way, and it seemed to Liubóff as though her father were on the point of weeping.

"Calm yourself, dear papa!" she said caressingly. "Perhaps the loss is not great."

"Not great?" cried Yákoff Tarásovitch sonorously. "What do you understand about it, you fool? Is it that the barge was smashed?! Ekh, you idiot! A man was injured! That's where the trouble lies! And, you see, I needed him! I needed him, you stupid devils!"

The old man, wrathfully shaking his head, strode, with rapid steps, along the garden-path, in the direction of the house.

But at that moment, Fomá was four hundred versts from his god-father, in a peasant cottage in a village on the bank of the Vólga. He had but just waked up, and as he lay on the floor of the cottage, on a bed of fresh hay, he stared with gloomy eyes out of the window, at the sky, covered with gray, ragged clouds.

The wind was rending them asunder, and driving them off; heavy and melancholy, they floated athwart the sky in a huge flock, overtook one another, merged themselves in a dense mass, again broke into fragments, descending low down toward the earth, in speechless rebellion, and again rising aloft, and engulfing each other.

Without moving his head, still heavy with intoxication, Fomá gazed for a long time at them, and, at last, he began to feel, as though in his breast also taciturn clouds were moving,—moving, and breathing a damp chill upon his heart and oppressing him. In the movement of the clouds in the sky, there was something timorous—and within himself he felt the same. Without thinking, he pictured to himself all that he had lived through during the last few months.

It seemed to him as though he had fallen into a turbid, boiling torrent, and now dark waves, similar to those clouds in the sky, had seized upon him,—had seized him and were carrying him off somewhere or other, as the wind was carrying the clouds. In the darkness and the tumult which surrounded him, he confusedly perceived that certain other people were being borne along with him—not the same today as yesterday,—new ones each day, but all alike, and equally pitiful, repulsive. Drunken, noisy, greedy, they circled around him, as in a whirlwind, caroused on his money, reviled him, quarrelled among themselves, shouted, even wept more than once. And he beat them. He remembered that, one day, he had struck someone in the face, had torn the frock-coat off someone, and flung it into the water, and that someone had kissed his hands with wet cold lips, disgusting lips, like a frog's.—Had kissed him, and had implored him, with tears not to kill them. Certain faces flitted before his memory, sounds and words

resounded in it. A woman, in a yellow dressing-jacket, unbuttoned on her breast, had sung, in a loud, sobbing voice:

"And thus we will live while we can. .
But there—not even the grass shall grow!"

All these people, like himself, were caught by the same dark billow, and were being borne along by it, like rubbish, and for some reason, had become savage like wild animals. All of them, like himself, must have been afraid to look ahead, to see whither this madly-powerful wave was carrying them. And as they drowned their terror in wine, they were torn onward with the current, floundering, shrieking, doing something silly, playing the fool, clamoring, clamoring, and they were never merry. And he, also, did the same, as he whirled among them. And now it appeared to him as though he had done all this out of fear of himself, in order the more speedily to pass that strip of his life, or, in order that he might not think what awaited him further on.

In the midst of the hurly-burly of the carouse, in the throng of people engaged in the debauch, bewildered with stormy passions, half crazy in the longing to forget themselves, Sásha alone had always been calm and even-tempered. She did not get tipsy, she always talked with people in a firm, imperious voice, and all her movements were confident, as though that torrent had not taken possession of her, but she was herself guiding its tempestuous course. She seemed to Fomá the most clever of all those who surrounded him, and the most eager for noise and carousing; she ordered them all about, and was constantly inventing something new, and she talked with everyone in the same manner: with cab-drivers, lackeys and sailors, in the same tone, with the same words as with her friends and with Fomá. She was handsomer and younger than Pelagáya,

but somehow, her caresses were taciturn, cold. Fomá imagined that she was concealing from everyone, deep down in her heart, something terrible, that she would never fall in love with anyone and reveal her whole self. This reserve in the woman attracted him to her with a feeling of timorous curiosity, of vast, strained interest in her cold and tranquil soul, dark as her eyes.

On one occasion Fomá happened to say to her:

"But what a lot of money you and I have squandered!"

She glanced at him, and asked:

"Why should you hoard it?"

"Why, in fact?" thought Fomá, astonished that she should reason so simply.

"Who are you?" he asked her, on another occasion.

"Have you forgotten my name?"

"Well, the idea of such a thing!"

"Then what is it you want to know?"

"I was inquiring as to your origin."

"Ah! Well, I'm a native of Yaroslávl Government,—I'm from Úglitch, of the petty burgher class. A harpist! And shall I be any the sweeter to you, now that you have found out who I am?"

"Have I found out?" asked Fomá, laughing.

"You know enough! And more, I will not tell to anyone. Why should I? People and beasts all come from one place. And what I can say about myself—to what end should I say it? All these conversations are stuff and nonsense. Come now, let's plan how we shall live today."

On that day they made a trip on a steamer, with a band of music, drank champagne, and all got frightfully intoxicated. Sásha sang a wonderfully mournful song, and Fomá wept like a child, being moved with her singing.

Then he danced the "Russian dance" with her, and, in conclusion, dripping with perspiration and exhausted, he flung himself overboard in his clothes, and came near drowning.

Now, as he recalled all this and much more, he felt ashamed of himself and displeased with Sásha. He gazed at her graceful figure, listened to her even breathing, and felt that he did not love this woman and did not want her. In his befuddled brain certain gray, oppressive thoughts came to life. It was as though everything which he had experienced during that period, had been twisted up within him into a heavy, damp ball, and now this ball was rolling in his breast, softly unwinding, and the thin, gray cords were binding him fast.

"What is this that is going on in me?" he said to himself. "Here I have begun to carouse—why? I don't know how to live—I don't understand myself. What sort of a fellow am I?"

He was struck with this question, and paused over it, striving to think it out—why he was not able to live steadfastly and confidently, as others live. He grew still more conscience-stricken and disquieted over this thought, he flung himself about on the hay, and nudged Sásha with his elbow, in vexation.

"Be quiet!" she said in her sleep.

"All right,—you're not very much of a lady," muttered Fomá. "What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing."

She turned her back to him, and yawning luxuriously, she began lazily:

"I dreamed that I was a harp-player again, I seemed to be singing a solo, and opposite me stood a great big dirty dog, snarling and waiting for me to finish. But I

was afraid of the dog, and I knew that it would devour me as soon as I stopped singing—so I kept on singing, and singing—and, all at once, it seemed as though my voice gave out. Horrible! And the dog gnashed its teeth. . Lord, have mercy! What does it portend?"

"Stop your jabber!" Fomá gruffly interrupted her. "See here, tell me, what do you know about me?"

"Why, I know that you have waked up," she replied, without turning toward him.

"I have waked up? That's true,—I am awake," said Fomá reflectively, and putting his arms under his head, he continued: "That's why I asked you—what sort of a man am I, in your opinion?"

"A drunken man," replied Sásha with a yawn.

"Alexándra!" exclaimed Fomá beseechingly, "don't trifle! Tell me, conscientiously, what do you think of me?"

"I don't think anything!" she answered drily. "Why are you so persistent with your nonsense?"

"Is it nonsense?" said Fomá sadly.—"Oh, you devil! It's the most fundamental thing—the thing I need the most."

He sighed heavily, and relapsed into silence. After lying a moment in silence also, Sásha began, in her customary, indifferent voice:

"Tell him what sort of a fellow he is, and why he is so? The idea! Is it proper to ask such women as we about that sort of thing? And where's the good of my thinking about every man? I have to think about myself, and, moreover, I haven't time,—and, perhaps, too, I don't want to do it."

Fomá gave a dry laugh, and said:

"I'd like to be like that . . . and not wish for anything!"

Then the woman raised her head from the pillow, took a look at Fomá's face, and lay down again, saying:

"You're getting subtle. Look out—no good will come to you of that. I can't say anything about you. No one can say anything true about a man—who can understand him? He doesn't even understand himself. Well, see here now, one thing I will say about you,—you're better than the others. But what of that?"

"And how am I better?" asked Fomá pensively.

"Why—in this way! When a fine song is sung, you weep . . if a man does a mean thing, you thrash him. With women you are simple,—you don't behave indecorously with them—you're peaceable,—well, and you can be audacious, on occasion."

All this did not satisfy Fomá.

"You're not telling me the right thing," he said softly.

"Well, I don't know what you want. But see here: they're raising the barge—what shall we do?"

"What can we do?" asked Fomá.

"Let's go to Nízhni or to Kazán."

"Why?"

"We'll carouse."

"I don't want to carouse any more."

"What will you do then?"

"What? Nothing."

"Re-eally?"

And, for a long time, neither spoke, nor even looked at each other.

"You have a difficult character," remarked Sásha.—"A tiresome character."

"Nevertheless, I'm not going to get drunk any more!" said Fomá firmly, and confidently.

"Nonsense!" retorted Sásha calmly.

"You'll see! What do you think about it—is it well to live so?"

"I shall see."

"No, tell me, is it well?"

"What is better?"

Fomá looked askance at her, and said, with vexation:

"What disgusting words you use."

"Well, and I haven't pleased him yet!" said Sásha, with a laugh.

"The mob!" said Fomá, contracting his face in pain. "They're like a piece of wood. They live, also . . but how? No one understands. They are crawling somewhere or other — and they can't say anything to themselves or to anyone else. A cockroach crawls—but he knows where he wants to go and why . . . but how about you? Where are you going. ."

"Stop!" Sásha interrupted him, and composedly inquired: "What have you to do with me? You take from me what you want, but don't you try to creep into my soul!"

"Into your — so-oul!" drawled Fomá scornfully. "Into what soul? He-he!"

She began to walk about the room, collecting her clothing, which was scattered everywhere. Fomá watched her, and was displeased because she did not get angry with him for his remark about her soul. Her visage was calm and indifferent, as usual, but he longed to see her vicious or insulted, he wanted something human from the woman.

"Soul!" he exclaimed, persisting in his attempt. "Can an individual who has a soul live as you live? In the soul fire burns—it feels shame. ."

At that moment, she was sitting on the bench, putting on her stockings, but at his words, she raised her head, and rivetted her stern eyes upon his countenance.

"What are you looking at?" inquired Fomá.

"Why do you say that?" she replied, not removing her eyes from him.

"Because—I felt that I must."

"Look out—must you?"

There was a menacing note in her voice. Fomá felt afraid of her, and the provocation had vanished from his voice when he said:

"How can I help speaking?"

"E-ekh, you simpleton!" sighed Sásha, and resumed her dressing.

"But what am I?"

"Why, this. . You are as though born of two fathers. Do you know what I have remarked about people?"

"Well?"

"The man who cannot answer for himself is afraid of himself, and he isn't worth a farthing!"

"Do you mean that for me?" asked Fomá, after a pause.

"Yes, I do."

She threw over her shoulders a capacious rose-colored dressing-gown, and as she stood in the middle of the room, she stretched out her hand to Fomá, who was lying at her feet, saying in a low, suppressed voice:

"Don't you dare to speak about my soul. You have nothing to do with it! Therefore—hold your tongue! I—may speak! If I choose, I could tell you all—ekh, what could I not tell you! Only, who will dare to listen to me, if I talk at the top of my voice? But I have some words about you—they're like hammers! I could give

you all such a rap over your pates—that you'd go crazy. But although you are all villains, you can't be cured with words. You ought to be burned in the fire — just as frying-pans are burned out on the first Monday in Lent."

Tossing her hands to her head, she impetuously loosened her hair, and when it fell over her shoulders, in heavy black tresses, the woman shook her head proudly, and said with scorn:

"Don't take into consideration that I'm a woman of gay habits! It does happen sometimes, that a man in the mire lives more cleanly than he who strolls about in silks. . . You ought to know what I think of you, you dog, what malice I cherish against you! And because of the malice, I hold my peace . . because I'm afraid that if I squander it on you, my soul will be empty, I shall have nothing left to live for."

Fomá gazed at her, and she pleased him now. In her words there was something akin to his mood. Laughingly, with satisfaction in his voice and on his face, he said to her:

"And I feel the same—something is springing up in my soul. Ekh, I, too, will express myself in my own words when the time comes."

"Against whom?" inquired Sásha carelessly.

"I—against everyone!" cried Fomá, springing to his feet.—"Against falsehood. I'll ask . ."

"Ask whether the samovár is ready?" Sásha ordered him, indifferently.

Fomá looked at her, and shouted angrily:

"Go to the devil! Ask yourself."

"Well, I will. What are you snarling about?"

And she quitted the cottage.

The wind was flying in sharp gusts across the river,

beating its bosom, and the stream, covered with troubled, tempestuous waves, was rushing convulsively to meet the wind with a noisy dashing, and all in a foam of wrath. The willow bushes on the shore bent low to the earth, quivering, and now tried to lie prone upon the ground, now wrenched themselves far away from it in terror, pursued by the blows of the wind. Through the air was borne a whistling, a roaring, and a thick groaning, wrested from the breasts of scores of people:

"It's coming—coming—coming!"

This exclamation, curt as a blow, and heavy as the breath of a huge breast, panting with exertion, was wafted across the river, fell upon its waves as though encouraging them in their stormy play with the waves, and they flung themselves mightily against the shores.

By the hill-shore, at anchor, lay two empty barges, and their lofty masts, rising heavenward, rocked alarmingly from side to side, as though engaged in sketching out an invisible pattern on the sky. Both decks of the barges were encumbered with scaffoldings, constructed of thick, light-brown beams; huge pulleys were hanging everywhere; chains and cables were suspended from them, swinging through the air; the links of the chains clashed faintly.—A throng of peasants in blue and red shirts were dragging a large beam along the deck, and tramping heavily, were grunting with the full power of their lungs:

"Heave-ho, heave-ho, heave-ho!"

Big blue and red balls of human bodies clung to the scaffoldings in every direction; the wind, inflating the shirts and trousers, imparted to the men weird forms, making them now hump-backed, now spherical and puffed-up like bladders. The men on the scaffoldings and decks of the barges were binding something, hew-

ing, sawing, driving in nails, and in every direction gleamed huge arms, with shirt-sleeves rolled up above the elbow. The wind disseminated chips and a varied lively, energetic noise upon the air: a saw gnawed at the wood, chuckling with spiteful glee; beams groaned and sighed drily, wounded by the axes; the planks crashed painfully, as they split beneath the blows dealt them; a plane squealed spitefully. The iron shriek of the chains, and the groaning screech of the pulleys were merged with the angry uproar of the waves, while the wind howled sonorously, disseminating over the river the sound of the labors, and drove the clouds across the sky.

"Míshka-a! Fire it u-up!" came a ringing shout from somewhere at the top of the scaffolding. And a huge peasant, on the deck, throwing back his head, replied:

"Wha-at?" and the wind, playing with his long, reddish beard, flung it in his face. "Gi-ive us the end . ."

Someone's resounding bass voice shouted, as though through a speaking-trumpet:

"You blind devil, how did you fasten on the board? Don't you see? I'll rub your eyes open for you!"

"Pu-ull awa-ay, my la-ads!"

"Heave-ho, my hea-arties!" cried out someone, imploringly, in a high-pitched voice.

Fomá, handsome and well-built, in a short cloth pea-jacket and tall boots, stood with his back propped against a mast, and plucking at his beard, with tremulous hand, admired the daring work of the peasants. The noise which hovered around him, aroused in him a genuine longing to shout, to create an uproar with the peasants, to hew wood, drag weights, give orders—make everyone direct their attention to him, and show to everyone his strength, skill, and the alert spirit in him. But he re-

strained himself and stood silent, motionless: he felt ashamed and afraid of something. He was embarrassed by the fact that he was the master over them all there, and that if he were to set to work himself, no one would believe, in all probability, that he was working simply to please himself, and not for the sake of spurring them on, setting them an example. And the peasants would, probably, jeer at him, to boot.

A young fellow with curly, auburn hair, whose shirt-collar was unbuttoned, kept running past him, now with a plank on his shoulder, again with an axe in his hand; he skipped like a gambolling goat, scattering around him his merry, ringing laughter, jests, vehement oaths, and working unweariedly, aiding now one, now another, running swiftly and agilely across the deck encumbered with chips and wood. Fomá watched him intently, and envied the gay young fellow, from whom emanated something healthy, stimulating.

"He must be happy," thought Fomá, and this idea evoked in him a sharp, piercing desire to abuse the fellow, to abash him. All around him were possessed with the ardor of urgent work, all were energetically and rapidly making fast the scaffoldings, arranging pulleys, preparing to raise the sunken barge from the bottom of the river; all were alertly cheerful, and—were alive. But he stood apart from them, not knowing what he could do, understanding nothing, feeling himself superfluous in this big undertaking. It offended him to think that he was superfluous among the men, and the more he watched them, the stronger did this sense of offense become. And what stung him most of all was the thought, that all this was being done for him, but that he had no hand in the matter.

"Where is my place?" he thought sullenly. "Where is my business? Am I a monster? I have as much strength as any of them. Of what use is it to me?"

The chains rattled, the pulleys groaned, the blows of the axes rang sonorously over the river, and the barges rocked under the buffets of the waves . . but it seemed to Fomá as though he rocked not because the deck was rolling under his feet, but because he did not understand how to stand firm on anything, it was not his fate to do so.

The contractor, an insignificant little peasant with a pointed, grayish beard, and narrow slits of eyes in his gray, wrinkled visage, stepped up to him, and said, not loudly, but with a certain peculiar distinctness in his words:

"We have prepared everything, Fomá Ignátievitch, everything is in good shape now. We'd better ask a blessing and begin."

"Well, begin," said Fomá curtly, turning away from the piercing glance of the peasant's narrow eyes.

"Then glory to Thee, O Lord!" said the contractor, deliberately buttoning up his vest, and assuming an air of dignity. Then, slowly turning his head, he surveyed the scaffoldings on the barges, separated by a strip of water about five fathoms wide, and suddenly uttered a ringing shout:

"To your pla-aces, my lads!"

The peasants scattered over the barges, quickly assembling in separate dense groups at the windlasses, along the sides, and ceased talking. Several climbed up with agility upon the scaffoldings, and thence looked silently on, holding on to ropes.

"Look out, boys!" rang out the contractor's sonorous,

quiet voice. "Is everything as it should be? Everything must be ready before we begin. Now—pray to God!"

And, flinging his cap on the deck, the contractor raised his face heavenward, and began to cross himself vehemently. And all the peasants, raising their heads toward the clouds, also began to flourish their arms broadly, making the sign of the cross upon their breasts. Some prayed aloud, and a dull, suppressed murmur mingled with the tumult of the waves.

"Bless, O Lord! O, all-holy Birth-Giver of God . . Saint Nicholas . ."

Fomá heard these exclamations, and they lay upon his soul like a heavy weight. All heads were bared, he alone had forgotten to remove his cap, and the contractor, having finished his prayer, insinuatingly advised him:

"You would do well to petition the Lord . ."

"Mind your own business—don't instruct me!" replied Fomá, with an angry glance at him. The further the matter proceeded, the more afflicting and humiliating did it become to him, to see that he was superfluous among these men, so calmly confident of their own powers, ready to raise for him several thousand poods from the bed of the river. He wished that they might fail, that all of them might be put to shame before him, and an evil thought flashed through his mind:

"Perhaps the chains will break."

"My lads! Listen!" shouted the contractor.—"All of you begin together. . 'Bless, O Lord!'" And, all at once, folding his hands in the air, he shouted in a piercing tone:

"Gi-i-i-ive wa-a-ay!"

The workmen caught his shout, and all shouted, in excitement and with a strong effort:

"Gi-i-ive wa-ay! Heave-ho!"

The pulleys whined and screeched, the chains rattled, straining under the load which was suddenly suspended from them, and the workmen, bracing their breasts against the bars of the windlasses, roared and tramped heavily across the deck. The waves plashed noisily between the barges, as though unwilling to yield up their prey to the men. Everywhere around Fomá, the cables, chains, and ropes strained and quivered with the effort; they crawled over the deck past his feet, like huge, gray worms, rising link by link, fell thence with a creak, but the deafening roar of the workmen drowned all other sounds.

"He-eave a-awa-ay, heave away, heave," they sang melodiously and triumphantly. But the ringing voice of the contractor pierced and cut the thick flood of their voices as a knife cuts bread:

"My la-a-ads! Pull away—all together . . all together!"

A strange emotion took possession of Fomá: he felt a passionate longing to pour himself into that excited roar of the workmen, broad and mighty as the river, into that irritating grating, shriek and scream of iron, and stormy plashing of the waves. The perspiration started out upon his face with the strength of his longings, and, all at once, tearing himself away from the mast, pale with excitement, he rushed with huge strides to a windlass, with:

"All to-ge-ether! All to-ge-ether!" he shouted in a fierce voice. On reaching the windlass-bar, he applied his breast to it with a dash, and, unconscious of the pain, he began, with a roar, to walk round the windlass, bracing his feet powerfully against the deck. A mighty,

burning sensation flooded his breast, replacing the forces which he expended in turning the hand-spike. Ineffable joy raged within him, and found outward vent in an excited shout. It seemed to him that he alone, by his own unaided power, was turning the hand-spike, which was raising the weight, and that his strength kept growing and growing. Bending down, and lowering his head, he strode like a bull to meet the burden, which was pushing him back, yet yielding to him, nevertheless. Every step forward excited him more and more, every exertion expended was instantly replaced within him by an inrush of seething, tempestuous pride. His head swam, his eyes were suffused with blood, he saw nothing, and all he felt was, that they were yielding to him, that he was conquering, that before long he would overthrow with his strength something huge which barred his path,—would overthrow it, would triumph, and then he would breathe freely and easily, filled with proud delight. For the first time in his life, he experienced such a mighty, inspiring sensation, and he gulped it down with all the force of his thirsty, hungry soul, became intoxicated with it, and poured forth his joy in loud, exultant shouts, in harmony with the workmen:

"Heave away all, heave away, heave!"

"Ha-alt! Make fast! Halt, boys!"

Fomá was struck in the breast, and hurled backwards.

"I congratulate you on a successful ending, Fomá Ignátievitch!" said the contractor, and the wrinkles quivered over his face in joyous rays. "Glory to Thee, O Lord! I think you must be tired?"

The cold wind blew in Fomá's face. A contented, boastful uproar surged around him; the peasants approached him, cursing each other in a friendly way, merry,

with smiles on their sweaty faces, and surrounded him in a close circle. He smiled abstractedly: the excitement within him had not yet calmed down, and did not allow him to comprehend what had happened, and why everyone around him was joyous and contented.

"One hundred and seventy thousand poods we have pulled up, like a radish from a garden-bed!" said someone.

"We ought to get a bucket of liquor from the master."

Fomá, standing on a coil of cable, looked over the heads of the workmen and saw: between the barges, side by side with them, a third barge had made its appearance, black, slippery, broken, wrapped about with chains. It was all warped, it seemed all swelled up with some terrible disease, and weak, and clumsy, it hung over the water between its companions, leaning upon them. The broken mast projected from its midst in a melancholy way; across the deck, all covered with spots of rust, trickled reddish streams of water, which resembled blood. Everywhere about the deck lay piles of iron, black, soaked fragments of wood, ropes.

"Have you raised it?" asked Fomá, not knowing what he ought to say at the sight of this hideous, heavy mass, and again experiencing a sense of injury at the thought that his soul had seethed so, that he had so rejoiced merely at raising from the water that dirty, shattered monster.

"Deuce take it," said Fomá irresolutely, to the contractor.

"It's all right! We'll unload it as soon as possible, and send a gang of twenty carpenters aboard—they'll soon bring it into shape!" said the contractor, in a consoling voice.

But the auburn-haired young fellow, smiling gaily and broadly in Fomá's face, inquired:

"Are we going to get any vódka?"

"There's plenty of time!" said the contractor gruffly to him.—"Don't you see—the man is tired. ."

Then the peasants spoke up:

"Of course he's tired!"

"'Twas no easy job!"

"Naturally, a man gets tired over work he isn't used to."

"It's hard to eat buckwheat groats even, if you aren't used to it."

"I'm not tired," said Fomá sullenly, and again the respectful shouts of the peasants rang out, as they gathered more closely around him.

"Work's pleasant, to anyone who likes it."

"It's regular play."

"It's like fondling a woman."

Only the auburn-haired young man would not yield his point:

"Your Honor! Are we to have the liquor, hey?" he said, with a smile and a sigh.

Fomá looked at the bearded faces before him, and felt a desire to say something insulting to them. But his head was still muddled, he could find no ideas in it, and, at last, taking in the sense of their remarks, he said angrily:

"All you want is to get drunk! You don't care what you do! You ought to reflect—why? To what purpose? Ekh, you rascals!"

Amazement was depicted on the countenances of the men about him; the bearded figures, blue and red, began to sigh, to scratch their heads, to shift from foot to foot. Some, after a despairing glance at Fomá, turned away.

"Well—well!" said the contractor, drawing a deep breath. "There's no harm done! That is to say—considering for what and how. . The words—are sensible. ."

The auburn-haired young man stuck to his peculiar opinion; he waved his hand, with a good-natured smile, and announced:

"It isn't our place to ponder over our work! It's our business to conquer it! Our job is simple: to do the work, and get the pay—and, glory to Thee, Oh Lord! We can do everything!"

"But do you know what you ought to do?" interrogated Fomá, irritated by this contradiction.

"Why, everything, this and that. ."

"But where's the sense?"

"There's sense in everything for our class alone—when you've earned enough for bread and taxes,—live! And if there's anything over for liquor. ."

"Ekh you!" exclaimed Fomá disdainfully. "So you're talking also! How much do you understand?"

"Can you understand our business?" said the auburn-haired fellow, shaking his head. He had got tired of talking to Fomá; he suspected him of a disinclination to give money for vódka, and was growing somewhat angry.

"Exactly so!" said Fomá didactically, pleased that the young fellow had yielded to him, and not observing the furtive, jeering glances. "He who does understand feels that he must work forever!"

"For God, of course!" explained the contractor, looking round at the peasants, and added, with a pious sigh: "That's true, okh, how true that is!"

But Fomá was inspired with the longing to say something straightforward and weighty, after which all the

men would bear themselves differently toward him, for he was not pleased that all of them, except the auburn-haired fellow, maintained silence, and stared at him in a hostile way, askance, with such bored, sullen eyes.

"You must do such work," he said, contracting his brows, "such work as—so that men may say, a thousand years later: 'See, the Bogoródskoe peasants did that.' . . Yes."

The auburn-haired fellow glanced at Fomá in surprise, and asked:

"Are we to drink the Vólga dry?" Then he snorted, and wagging his head, he declared: "We can't do that—we should all burst!"

Fomá was disconcerted by his remarks, and looked about him: the peasants were smiling grimly, scornfully, sarcastically. . And their smiles stung him like needles.

A grave-faced peasant, with a large gray beard, who, up to that time had not opened his mouth, now suddenly opened it, stepped up to Fomá, and said deliberately:

"But even if we were to drink the Vólga dry—and eat up yonder mountains to boot,—even that would be forgotten, your Honor. Everything is forgotten—life is long. It is not for us to do such deeds as stand out big above all the others.—But we can set up this lumber here."

He spoke, and sceptically spitting at his feet, he walked indifferently away from Fomá, and disappeared in the throng, like a wedge in a tree. His speech dealt Fomá the finishing blow; he felt that the peasants regarded him as stupid and ridiculous. And, in order to save his importance as master in their eyes, in order to attract the exhausted attention of the peasants once more to himself, he swelled out his chest, puffed out his cheeks

in an absurd manner, and blurted out, in an impressive voice:

"I make you a gift of three buckets of liquor!" [1]

Brief speeches are always the most eloquent, and are always apt to produce a powerful impression. The peasants respectfully made way for Fomá, bowing low before him, and with cheerful, grateful smiles, thanked him for his generosity in a friendly roar of approval.

"Take me over to the shore," said Fomá, conscious that the newly-aroused excitement within him would not last long. Some worm or other was gnawing at his heart, and he felt bored. "I'm disgusted with things!" he said, entering the cottage, where Sásha, in a smart pink gown was bustling about the table, setting out wines and light refreshments.—"I'm disgusted, Alexándra! I wish you'd do something with me, can't you?"

She looked at him attentively, and seating herself on the wall-bench, shoulder to shoulder with him, she said:

"If you're disgusted, it signifies that you want something. What is it that you want?"

"I don't know!" replied Fomá, shaking his head mournfully.

"But think—search . ."

"I don't know how to think. Nothing comes of my thinking."

"Ekh, you—baby!" said Sásha softly, and with immense scorn, moving away from him. "Your head is superfluous to you."

Fomá did not catch her tone, and did not notice her movement. Resting his hands on the bench, he bent forward, and stared at the floor, rocking his whole body to and fro:

[1] A *vedró*, or bucket, contains 2.70 gallons.—*Translator.*

"Sometimes you think, and think,—and thoughts stick all round your soul, as with resin. And, all at once, everything vanishes from you, as though it had dropped through the earth. Then, it's as dark in your soul as in a cellar, damp and utterly empty . . there's nothing at all there! It's even terrible,—as though you were not a man, but a bottomless ravine. What do I want?"

Sásha cast a sidelong glance at him, and began to sing pensively, in an undertone:

"Ekh, and when the wind begins to blow—the fog will rise up from the sea."

"I don't want to carouse—it's repulsive! It's always the same thing, over and over: the people, the amusements, and the wine. I grow malicious—I'd like to beat everybody. People don't please me — what are they? You can't in the least understand them—why they go on living? And when they speak the truth, whom are you to listen to? One says one thing, another another. But I—can't say anything at all."

"Ekh, my life is hateful to me, dear, without thee," sang Sásha, gazing at the wall in front of her.

But Fomá continued to rock back and forth, and said:

"There are times when I feel myself culpable before people—they all live, make a noise, but I am frightened, and staggered. And I don't seem to feel the firm earth beneath me. I wonder if my mother endowed me with insensibility? My god-father says she was like ice. And she was always longing for something. So am I.—I long for people. I'd like to go and say: 'Help me, my brethren! Teach me! I cannot live! But if I am to blame, forgive me!' I look about, there is no one to whom to say it. No one wants it—they're all rabble! And even

if they were worse than I am—I'm ashamed to live as I am living,—but they don't mind it! They act . . ."

Fomá uttered a violent, unseemly oath, and fell silent. Sásha broke off her song, and moved still further away from him. The wind was howling outside the windows, flinging dust against the panes. On the oven cockroaches were rustling, as they climbed up a bundle of pine-knots for lighting. A calf was bellowing pitifully somewhere out of doors.

Sásha glanced at Fomá with a sneer, and said:

"There's another unhappy wretch bellowing. You ought to go to him; perhaps you could sing together. ." And laying her hand on his curly head, she playfully pushed it on one side.

"You ought to reflect as to what such people as you are good for. Why do you squeal? If you are disgusted with carousing—occupy yourself with business."

"O Lord!" and Fomá shook his head, "it's difficult to express myself so that you will understand—difficult!" —And he almost shouted with vexation: "What business? I have no inclination for business! What business? Only a name—business, but if you look into it deeply, go to the root of it, it's nonsense! Don't I understand that? I understand everything, I see everything, I feel everything! Only—my tongue is dumb. What profit is there in business affairs? Money? I have plenty of it! I can choke you to death with it, bury you over your head with it. All business affairs are mere fraud. I see men of business—well, and what of that? They are very greedy,—and yet they busy themselves with affairs for the express purpose of not seeing themselves. They hide themselves, the devils. Now, release them from those anxieties,—what will happen? They will be-

gin to rush about hither and thither like blind men—they lose every idea,—they go crazy! I know it! But you think, if a man has a business, he will be happy? No, nonsense,—something else is required,—he hasn't everything yet! The river flows, that men may sail upon it, wood grows for use, dogs grow to guard the house,—you can find a justification for everything on earth. But men, like cockroaches, are altogether superfluous on the earth. Everything is for them—and what are they for? Aha? Where is their justification? Ha, ha!"

Fomá was triumphant. It seemed to him that he had found something which was good for himself, and mighty against people. And conscious of a great joy within him, he laughed loudly.

"Doesn't your head ache?" Sásha inquired anxiously, gazing into his face with a searching look.

"My soul aches!" exclaimed Fomá passionately. "And it aches, because—it is upright—it will not be reconciled to pettiness. Give it an answer, how to live? for what? There's my god-father—he's clever! He says—make your life! He's the only one who does. Well, I say to him, wait! But everyone else says, life has devoured us! Life has stifled us. And I inquire of them, And how is life to be made? To that end, it must be held in the hands . . it must be controlled. You can't make even a pot without holding it in your hands."

"Hearken to me," said Sásha gravely, "I think you ought to marry—that's all there is to it!"

"Why?" asked Fomá, twitching his shoulders.

"You need the halter."

"All right! I'm living with you. You're all alike, I think. One is no sweeter than another. I had a woman before you . . of the same sort as yourself. No, she

did it of her own free will—she took a liking to me and —consented. She was good—however, she was just like you, only you are handsomer. . But I took a fancy to a certain lady,—a real lady, a noblewoman! They said she was depraved. But I did not get her. We-ell then. She was clever, well educated,—she lived in beauty. I used to think, sometimes,—here I shall have a taste of the real thing! I didn't get it—but perhaps, if I had succeeded, everything would have taken another turn. I longed for her. . I thought I couldn't tear myself away. But now—I have been drunk, I have drowned her with wine, . . I am forgetting her. . And that's not right, either. Ekh, you man! You're a rascal, to speak according to conscience."

Fomá stopped, and fell into thought. But Sásha rose from the bench, and paced to and fro in the cottage, biting her lips. Then she halted in front of him, and throwing her arms up behind her head she said:

"Do you know what? I'm going away from you."

"Whither?" asked Fomá, without raising his head.

"I don't know,—it doesn't matter."

"But why?"

"You're always saying unnecessary things. It's tiresome with you—you make one melancholy."

Fomá raised his head, looked at her, and broke into a mournful laugh.

"Come now! you don't say so!"

"You do! Now, see here: If I think it over, I understand what you say, and why you say it. . For I'm one of that sort myself—when my time comes, I shall grow sad, also. And then I shall disappear. But it's early for me yet. No, I shall go on living for a while, and then,—I don't care what happens!"

"And I, also, shall disappear?" asked Fomá indifferently, already exhausted with his harangues.

"Of course!" replied Sásha calmly and confidently. "All such people disappear. What sort of life can a person have whose character is not brittle, and who has no brains? That's our sort. . ."

"No, I have no character," said Fomá, stretching himself. Then he paused, and added: "And no brains."

Then both remained silent for a moment, gazing into each other's eyes.

"What shall we do?" asked Fomá.

"We must dine."

"No, in general? Afterwards?"

"Afterwards? I—I don't know."

"So you are going away?"

"Yes. Let's have another spree by way of farewell. Let's go to Kazán, and there we'll have a carouse with smoke and fire. I'll sing your dirge."

"We can do that!" assented Fomá. "As a farewell—it's proper. Ekh, you devil! Life . . mirth! But listen, Sáshka; they say that when you are on a spree, you are greedy of money, and even a thief."

"Let them say it," said Sásha coolly.

"Don't you feel insulted?" asked Fomá, with curiosity. "You see, you are not greedy—it's profitable for you to be with me, . . I'm rich, but you are going to leave me . . and that means you are not greedy."

"I?" Sásha reflected, and said, with a wave of her hand: "Perhaps I am not greedy,—but what of that? You see, I'm not thoroughly base, as yet,—not the sort which walks the streets. But feel insulted—by whom? Let them say what they like. If people do talk, they aren't bulls bellowing. . And I know well the saintli-

ness and honesty of men, ekh, how well I know them! If I were chosen as judge, I wouldn't acquit anyone but a dead man!" And breaking into an evil laugh, Sásha said: "Come, we've talked enough nonsense—seat yourself at the table!"

On the morning of the following day, Fomá and Sásha stood on the gangway of a steamer which was approaching a wharf on the Ústye. Sásha's huge black hat attracted general attention among the spectators by its audaciously curved brim and white feathers, . and Fomá was embarrassed at standing by her side, and felt the curious glances creeping, as it were, over his face. The steamer was hissing and quivering, as it butted its sides against the landing, sprinkled with a crowd of people gaily attired in summer garments, who were awaiting it, and it seemed to Fomá that he descried among the varied faces and figures some acquaintance of his, who kept dodging behind the backs of the people, but never took his eyes from him.

"Let's go into the cabin!" he said uneasily, to his friend.

"Don't you learn to hide your sins from people," replied Sásha, with a laugh. "Do you see a friend—is that it?"

"Mm . . ye-es. Someone is watching me."

"A nurse with a feeding-bottle? Ha, ha, ha!"

"There you go, neighing again!" said Fomá with a fierce side-glance at her. "Do you think I'm afraid?"

"I perceive your bravery."

"You will perceive it! I'll face everybody," said Fomá viciously; but, after casting another glance at the crowd upon the wharf, he suddenly changed countenance, and added softly:

"It's my god-father."

At the very edge of the landing, squeezing himself between two female steerage passengers, stood Yákoff Tarásovitch Mayákin, waving his cap in the air, with malicious courtesy, with his face, which resembled a holy picture, turned upward. His beard was trembling, his bald spot glistened and his little eyes pierced Fomá like augers.

"A regular vulture!" muttered Fomá, as he moved his own cap, and nodded to his god-father.

His salutation must have afforded great pleasure to Mayákin.—The old man seemed to writhe all over, he stamped his feet, and his face lighted up with a spiteful smile.

"Evidently, the little boy will get some money for nuts!" said Sásha teasingly to Fomá.

Her words, joined to his god-father's smile, burned in Fomá's breast like live coals.

"We shall see what will happen," he muttered between his teeth, and suddenly grew numb in angry composure. The steamer made its landing, and the people rushed in a wave to the wharf. Mayákin, hemmed in by the crowd, disappeared for a moment from the sight of his god-son, then dived up again, smiling with a sharp, spitefully triumphant grin. Fomá, with lowering brows, stared straight at him, and moved to meet him, walking deliberately across the gangway. People punched him in the back, jostled him, crowded upon him,—and all this still further excited Fomá. Now he came into collision, breast to breast, with the old man, and the latter greeted him with a courteous bow and the question:

"Whither are you pleased to journey, Fomá Ignátievitch?"

"About my own business," replied Fomá firmly, without replying to his god-father's greeting.

"Very laudable, my dear sir!" said Yákoff Tarásovitch, beaming all over with smiles. "What relation does the lady with the white feathers bear to you?"

"She's my mistress," said Fomá in a loud voice, without lowering his eyes before his god-father's sharp gaze.

Sásha was standing behind him staring calmly over his shoulder at the little old man, whose head did not come up to Fomá's chin. The public, attracted by Foma's loud words, stared at them, in anticipation of a scandalous scene. Mayákin, also, immediately perceiving the possibility of a scene, instantaneously and accurately gauged his god-son's mood. He contorted his wrinkles, chewed his lips, and said peaceably to Fomá:

"I must have a talk with you. Will you come to the hotel with me?"

"Yes, . . but not for long."

"You haven't the time, you mean? The matter is plain—you're in a hurry to smash up another barge?" said the old man, unable to contain himself.

"And why not smash them, if they're smashable?" retorted Fomá, angrily but steadily.

"Of course! . . You didn't earn them,—why should you spare them? Well, come along. .—And couldn't you drown that lady in the water for the time being?" said Mayákin softly.

"Go to the town, Sásha, and engage a room at the Siberian Inn. . I'll be there before long!" said Fomá, and turning to Mayákin, he announced boldly:

"I'm ready! Come on!"

Both of them walked in silence to the hotel. Fomá, perceiving that his god-father, in order not to be left be-

hind, was skipping as he went, deliberately took long strides, and the fact that the old man could not keep up with him, maintained and augmented in him the stormy feeling of protest, which he was, by this time, barely able to hold in check.

"My dear man!" said Mayákin suavely, as he entered the hall of the hotel, and directed his steps to a remote corner.—"Bring a bottle of moor-berry kvas."

"And some brandy for me," ordered Fomá.

"The-ere now. When you hold a bad hand you always lead your lowest trump!" Mayákin advised him, with a sneer.

"You don't know my game!" said Fomá, taking his seat at the table.

"Re-eally? Have done! Many play that way."

"How?"

"Why, like you—boldly but not cleverly."

"I play so that—either the pate is smashed to flinders or the wall splits!" said Fomá hotly, and pounded the table with his fist.

"Haven't you got over your fit of intoxication today yet?" inquired Mayákin, with a smile.

Fomá drew up closer to the table, and, with a face disfigured by wrathful emotion, broke out:

"Papa god-father! You're a clever man—I respect you for your brains. ."

"Thanks, my dear son!" Mayákin bowed his recognition, rising and propping his hands on the table.

"You're very welcome. I wish to say, that I'm over twenty years old. . I'm no longer a child."

"No indeed!" assented Mayákin. "You've lived a good while, there's no denying it! If a gnat had lived as long, he would have grown as big as a hen."

"Stop your joking!" said Fomá, warningly, and did it so quietly that Mayákin fairly curled up, and the wrinkles on his face shook in alarm.

"Why have you come hither?" asked Fomá.

"Ah—you've been behaving outrageously yonder, and I want to see—whether you have exceeded the limits. You see, I'm a sort of relation of yours—I'm the only one you have. ."

"You're troubling yourself for nothing. Now, see here, papa. Either give me complete independence, or else take my entire business into your own hands—take it all! To the very last ruble!"

This proposition burst forth from Fomá quite unexpectedly to himself; he had never even thought of such a thing before. But now, after uttering such words to his god-father, he suddenly realized, that if his god-father were to take from him all his property,—he would become a perfectly free man, he might go whithersoever he chose, do whatsoever he pleased. Up to that moment he had been bound up in something or other, but did not recognize the meshes and was not able to tear them off, but now they were falling from him of their own accord, very easily and simply. An alarming and joyous hope flashed up in his breast, he seemed to perceive that light had broken in, from some quarter, upon his troubled life, and a broad, spacious road appeared to lie before him. Certain images were begotten in his brain, and as, with amazement, he watched them shifting and changing, he murmured incoherently:

"There . . . that is the best way! Take everything, and have done with it! But I—shall be free to go where I please!—I can't live on like this . . as though weights were hanging on me. . I'm completely

pinioned. I can't go here or there—I can't do this or that. I want to live in freedom . . that I may know everything myself. . I will search out life for myself. . Otherwise, what am I? A prisoner. Please take it all—to the devil with it all! Release me, I pray you! What sort of a merchant am I? I don't like anything. But if you would do that, I would go away from people, from everything,—I would find a place for myself. . I would take up some sort of work—I would, by God! Papa! Set me at liberty. . . You see, I'm drinking—I'm entangled with a woman. ."

Mayákin gazed at him, attentively listened to his speech, and his face was surly, immovable, as though turned to stone. Round about them hovered the dull roar of the restaurant, several persons walked past them and bowed to Mayákin, but he saw nothing, as he scrutinized the agitated countenance of his god-son, which wore an abstracted, joyous, and, at the same time, a pitiful smile.

"E-ekh, you sour blackberry!" he said, with a sigh, interrupting Fomá's harangue.—"You have gone astray, I see. . And you are babbling nonsense. . I'd like to know, whether this is the result of brandy, or of stupidity?"

"Papa!" exclaimed Fomá. "Surely, it can be done! You see, it has been done—men have abandoned all their possessions, and have saved themselves thereby. ."

"Not in my time—nobody whom I know intimately!" said Mayákin severely. "If they had . . I'd have shown them!"

"There have been a great many saints, who went away. ."

"Mm . . they wouldn't have gone off if I'd had

anything to say about it! . . The matter is simple—do you know how to play draughts? You go from square to square until you get thrown out—and if you don't get thrown out—then you become a king! And then all paths are open to you. Do you understand? And why do I talk seriously with you? Pshaw!"

"Papa! Why won't you do it?" cried Fomá angrily.

"Listen to me! If you are a chimney-sweep, crawl to the roof! If you're a fireman,—stand on the watch-tower! And every sort of man ought to have his own order of life. Calves don't roar like bears! You are living your own life—live it! And don't talk drivel, don't try to climb where you have no business. Make your own life—after its appointed sort."—And from the old man's dark mouth poured forth in a palpitating, brilliant stream, the quavering but confident and daring harangue with which Fomá was so familiar. He did not listen to it, engrossed as he was in the thought of freedom, which seemed to him so easily possible. This idea sank deep into his brain, and in his breast the desire grew stronger and stronger to break off his connection with this turbid and wearisome life, with god-fathers, steamers, barges, carouses,—with everything in the midst of which he found it so stifling and confining to live.

The old man's speech seemed to be wafted to him from afar: it merged itself with the rattling of the crockery, with the shuffling of the servants' feet on the floor, and with someone's drunken shout. At a table not far from them sat four merchants, who were wrangling loudly.

"Two and a quarter—and—pray to God!"

"Luká Mítritch! The idea of such a thing!"

"Give him two and a half!"

"Correct! You must give it—it's a good steamer, it tows briskly."

"My dear fellows! I can't—two and a quarter!"

"And all this nonsense has bred in your pate—from your youthful passion!" said Mayákin weightily, tapping the table with his hand.—"Your audacity is stupidity; all these speeches of yours are stuff and nonsense . . Hadn't you better enter a monastery? Or, perhaps, you prefer to beg on the highways?"

Fomá listened in silence. The uproar which was seething around him seemed to retreat farther and farther away. He imagined himself in the midst of a vast, surging throng of people who, for some unknown reason, were rioting, jumping on one another, with their eyes eagerly staring wide open, they were howling, cursing, falling, crushing one another, and all pushing onward to the same goal. He felt ill at ease among them because he did not understand what they wanted, he did not believe their words, and felt that they themselves did not believe themselves or understand anything. And if he were to tear himself away from their midst to freedom, on the edge of life, and gaze at them from that point,—then he would understand everything. He would understand what they wanted, and would see where, among them, was his place.

"For I understand," said Mayákin more gently, on seeing Fomá thoughtful, and assuming that he was pondering his words,—"you want happiness for yourself . . . Well, my friend, it is not speedily won . . It must be sought for, like mushrooms in the forest, you must bend your back till it aches over them, . . and when you have found them —look out that they are not toadstools."

"So you will set me free?" asked Fomá suddenly raising his head, and Mayákin turned his eyes away from his burning gaze.

"Papa! If only for a time! Give me a chance to breathe

. . give me a chance to step aside from everything!" entreated Fomá. "I will watch how everything goes on . . and then, perhaps . . But if I go on like this, I shall drink myself to death."

"Don't talk twaddle! Why do you play the fool?" shouted Mayákin angrily.

"Very well then!" replied Fomá quietly.—"All right! You won't do it? Then—there will be nothing! I'll get rid of everything! And we have nothing more to say to each other—farewell! I'll set to work now—you shall see! Rejoice—there'll be the devil to pay!"

Fomá was composed, and talked confidently; it seemed to him, that if he had come to this decision—his god-father could not hinder him. But Mayákin drew himself up stiffly in his chair, and said—also simply and composedly:

"Do you know how I can deal with you?"

"As you please!" said Fomá, with a wave of the hand.

"Here then. If I choose, I can go to town and have it arranged that you shall be declared crazy, and put in the lunatic asylum."

"Is it possible?" inquired Fomá, incredulously, but with a touch of alarm in his voice.

"Everything is possible with us, my dear fellow."

"You don't say so!"

Fomá dropped his head, and stared furtively at his god-father's face, trembling as he reflected:

"He'll do it, . . he'll show no mercy."

"If you play the fool seriously, then I must also take serious measures with you. I pledged my word to your father to set you on your feet. And I'll do it . . if you don't remain standing, I'll hoop you with iron . . Then you will stand . . As if I didn't know that all these words of yours are mischievous extravagances bred by liquor . .

But if you don't give that up,—if you continue your indecent conduct, and undertake to ruin the property your father accumulated, out of insolence,—I'll cover you up completely, from the head down—I'll put a bell-glass over you. It's an awkward thing to jest with me."

Mayákin spoke suavely. The wrinkles on his cheeks all curved upward, and his little eyes smiled sneeringly, coldly, from their little, dark bags. The furrows on his brow also formed a sort of strange pattern, as they rose toward his bald spot. His face was inflexible and pitiless, and inspired Fomá's soul with cold and melancholy.

"So there is no alternative for me?" said Fomá sullenly. —"You are cutting off all outlets from me?"

"You have an alternative—go ahead! But I will guide you—don't worry—it will be safe! You'll find yourself in exactly your proper place."

This self-confidence, this unshakable boastfulness, made Fomá explode. Thrusting his hands into his pockets, in order to avoid striking the old man, he straightened himself up on his chair, and, with clenched teeth, began, straight in his god-father's face:

"Why do you brag? What have you to brag about? Your son—where is he? Your daughter—what is she? Ekh, you manager of life! Come now, you're clever, you know everything—tell me, why do you live? Why do you accumulate money? Aren't you going to die? Well, what then? You have kept me in bondage, you have taken possession of me, subdued me . . Wait a bit—just wait, perhaps I shall break loose! I'm not done with you yet! E-ekh, you!—What have you done for life? By what are men going to remember you? There was my father—he built a house, but what have you done?"

Mayákin's wrinkles quivered, and all assumed a down-

ward curve, which imparted to his visage a suffering, weeping expression. He opened his mouth, but said nothing, as he stared at his god-son in amazement, and almost with fear.

"How do you justify yourself?" inquired Fomá, in a low tone, never removing his eyes from him.

"Shut up, you puppy!" said the old man softly, casting a glance of alarm round the room.

"I've said my say, and now I'm going! Just try to stop me!"

Fomá rose from his chair, flung his cap on his head, and cast a hostile glance at the old man.

"Go . . but I'll . . I'll . . catch you! I'll have my day!" said Yákoff Tarásovitch with a broken voice.

"And I'll go on a debauch! I'll squander everything in carousing!"

"All right—we'll see about that!"

"Good-bye. You hero . . ." laughed Fomá.

"Farewell, for a short time! I won't give up my own way . . I love that . . and I love you—never mind, you're a good little lad!" said Mayákin softly, as though sighing.

"Don't love me—instruct me . . But what you cannot do is to instruct me in the real way!" said Fomá, turning his back to the old man, and he left the room.

Yákoff Tarásovitch Mayákin was left alone in the restaurant. He sat still at the table, and bending over it, traced patterns on the tray, wetting his trembling finger in the kvas which had been spilled. And his pointed head drooped lower and lower over the table, as though he were unable to decipher, and could not understand what his lean finger was tracing on the tray.

Drops of perspiration glistened on his bald head, and, as

usual, the wrinkles on his cheeks quivered with frequent, anxious twitches.

But in the restaurant reigned a resounding uproar, which made the glass in the windows rattle. From the Vólga were wafted the whistles of steamers, the dull beating of paddle-wheels on the water, the shouts of stevedores—life was moving onward ceaselessly, undoubtingly.

Summoning a waiter with a nod, Yákoff Tarásovitch asked him, with peculiar impressiveness and intensity:

"What do I owe for all this?"

X

Up to the time of his quarrel with his god-father, Fomá had caroused because he found life tiresome, out of curiosity, and half-indifferently,—now he did it out of exasperation, almost in despair, being filled with a sentiment of revenge, and of a certain audacity toward people in general,—an audacity which at times, amazed even himself. He perceived that the people round about him were, like himself, lacking in a point of support, in sense, only they did not understand it, or deliberately refused to understand it, in order that they might not be hindered in living blindly, and surrendering themselves completely, without reflection, to their dissolute mode of life. He found in them nothing firm, steadfast; when sober, they appeared to him unhappy and stupid, when drunk, they were repulsive and still more stupid. Not one of them aroused in him respect, and profound, hearty interest; he did not even inquire their names, forgot when and where he had made their acquaintance, and bearing himself always toward them with scornful curiosity, always felt a desire to say and to do something offensive to them. He spent days and nights with them in various places of amusement, and his acquaintances always depended directly upon the rank of each resort. In the expensive and fashionable restaurants, he was surrounded by sharks of the better class—sharpers, couplet-writers, jugglers, actors, landed proprietors who had ruined themselves with carousing. These people, at first, bore themselves toward him with a patronizing air, and boasted in his

presence of their refined tastes, their knowledge of the merits of wines and viands, and then tried to curry favor with him, licked his boots, borrowed money of him, which he flung away without keeping count of it, drawing it from the bank, and even borrowing on promissory notes. In the cheap eating-houses, hair-dressers, and billiard-markers hovered about him like vultures, along with clerks, officials, singers; and among these people he always felt better, more at ease. In them he saw simple people, who were not so monstrously affected and distorted, like all that "clean public" of the fashionable restaurants,—they were less depraved, more clever, understood him more simply, occasionally revealed strong, healthy sentiments, and they always had about them something which was more human. But, like the "clean public," these men, also, were greedy, and plundered him shamelessly; but he saw this, and jeered roughly at them.

As a matter of course, there were women. Physically sound, but not sensual, Fomá bought them, both the dear and the cheap, the handsome and the homely, gave them huge amounts of money, changed them almost every week, and, in general, treated them better than he did the men. He laughed at them, used disgraceful and insulting language to them, but never, even when half-drunk could he divest himself of a certain embarrassment before them. All of them—the boldest, the most robust, and the most shameless—seemed to him weak and defenceless, like little children. Always ready to thrash any man that came along, he never laid hand upon a woman, although he sometimes cursed them outrageously, when irritated. He felt himself incomparably stronger than any woman, and every woman seemed to him immeasurably more unhappy than he was. Those who led their depraved lives rakishly, mak-

ing a boast of their dissoluteness, evoked in Fomá a feeling of shame, which rendered him bashful and awkward. One day, one of these women, drunken and insolent, as she sat beside him at supper slapped his cheek with a melon-rind. Fomá was half-drunk. He turned pale with the affront, rose from his chair, and, thrusting his hands into his pockets, he said in a ferocious voice, which trembled with rage:

"You carrion! Begone . . be off with you! Any other man would have broken your skull for that . . But you know that I am peaceable with you, and that my hand is never raised against one of your sort . . Drive her away to the devil!"

A few days after their arrival in Kazán, Sásha became the mistress of a certain vódka-distiller's son, who had been carousing with Fomá. As she was departing, with her new master, for some spot on the Káma, she said to Fomá:

"Farewell, dear man! Perhaps we shall meet again . . we are both travelling the same road! But I advise you not to give your heart free play. Carouse away, without regard to anything . . but if you mix your heart up with it—the porridge gets spilled and the bowl is smashed on the floor . . . Good-bye!"

And she kissed him warmly on the lips, whereat her eyes grew still darker than usual.

Fomá was delighted that she was going away from him: he had got tired of her, and her cold indifference frightened him. But at that moment something quivered within him, he turned away from her, and said softly:

"Perhaps you will not find things to your liking . . in that case, come back to me."

"Thanks," she replied, and for some reason, broke into a hoarse laugh which was not usual with her.

Thus did Fomá live on, day after day, gyrating always in

one spot, and among people who were always alike, and who never inspired him with any good sentiments. He still regarded himself as their superior, because the idea that it was possible to free himself from this life became more and more firmly implanted in his head, because the desire for freedom took ever firmer possession of him, because, ever more clearly, did he imagine himself as going away to the edge of life, away from this turmoil and labyrinth. Many a time, by night, when he was all alone by himself, he shut his eyes tight, and pictured to himself a dark throng of people, incalculably great and even terrible in its vastness. Crowded together somewhere in a deep valley which was surrounded by hillocks, and filled with a dusty haze, this throng, in noisy confusion, jostled each other constantly on the same spot, like grain in the hopper of a mill. It seemed as though an invisible mill-stone, concealed beneath the feet of the throng, were grinding it, and the people were moving beneath it in waves, now drawn downward, in order to be the more quickly ground up there, now surging upward, in the effort to avoid the pitiless mill-stone. There were other people, also, who resembled crabs, just caught and tossed into a huge basket,—clutching hold of each other, they moved heavily round and round, crawled off somewhere, and impeded each other, and could do nothing to escape from captivity.

Among the throng Fomá saw familiar faces: there is his father, striving in some direction, mightily thrusting aside and knocking down all who stand in his way; he is working with capacious paws—pressing his chest against everything, and laughing in stentorian tones—then he vanishes, sinking down into the depths, beneath the feet of the people. Yonder, writhing like an adder, now leaping upon the people's shoulders, now creeping between their feet, is

his god-father, toiling with all his lean but supple and sinewy body . . Liubóff is weeping and struggling, as she follows her father, with spasmodic but impotent movements, now getting separated from him, again drawing near to him. With soft footsteps, and a kindly smile on her countenance, and holding aloof from everyone, making way for everyone, his aunt Anfísa moves slowly onward . . . her image vacillates in the darkness before Fomá, like the modest flame of a wax taper . . . and goes out, vanishes in the gloom. Pelagáya is walking swiftly, and by a straight path to some goal or other . . Yonder is Sófya Pávlovna Medýnsky standing, helpless, with hands hanging by her side, as she stood on that last occasion—in her own drawing-room . . Her eyes are large, and a great terror gleams in them. There is Sásha, also. Indifferent, paying no heed to the jostling, she walks on firmly straight into the thickest dregs of life, singing her songs at the top of her voice, gazing calmly before her with her dark eyes. Fomá hears the uproar, the yells, the laughter, the drunken shouts, the angry quarrelling over kopéks; songs and wailing float over this huge, troubled heap of living human bodies, confined in that pit; they leap and fall, and climb, crush one another, leap upon one another's shoulders, bustle in every direction, like blind people, everywhere come into collision with others like themselves, struggle and, falling, disappear from sight. The money rustles, as it hovers, like bats, over the heads of these people, and the people eagerly stretch out their hands toward it, the gold and silver jingles, bottles clash, corks pop, someone sobs, and a mournful female voice sings:

> "Thus will we live, while we ca-an,
> But there—not even the grass shall grow!"

This senseless picture rivetted itself in Fomá's brain, and with every recurrence it rose up more and more clearly, more and more huge and vivid, arousing in his breast something chaotic, a vast, undefined feeling, into which had poured, like brooks into a river, terror, and agitation, and pity, and anger and much more besides. All this seethed in his breast to strained desire,—to the point of bursting,—to a desire whose force made him sigh, and made the tears well up in his eyes, and he wanted to cry aloud, to howl like a wild beast, to frighten everyone—to put a stop to their senseless turmoil, to inject into the clamor and vanity of their life something new, something of his own, to speak to them loud, firm words, to turn them all in one direction, and not against each other. He wanted to grasp them in his hands by their heads, to tear them apart, one from another, to administer a sound beating to some, to fondle others, to reproach all, to illuminate them with some fire or other . . .

There was nothing in him—neither the necessary words, nor the fire—there was nothing but the longing, comprehensible to him, but impossible of execution . . He imagined himself high above life, outside of that deep valley wherein these people were seething; he beheld himself standing firmly on his feet and—dumb. He might have shouted to the people:

"How are you living? Are not you ashamed?,"

And he might have reviled them. But if, at the sound of his voice, they were to inquire:

"But how ought we to live?"

He understood perfectly well, that after that question he would be forced to fly down headlong from the heights, down there, beneath the feet of the people, upon the millstone. And they would have accompanied his ruin with laughter.

He sometimes grew delirious under the oppression of this nightmare. Words without coherence or meaning burst from his lips; he even perspired with this painful turmoil within him. At times, it seemed to him that he was going crazy from intoxication, and that was why all this dreadful and morose stuff was making its way into his brain. With a great effort of will he banished these pictures and impulses from him, but no sooner did he find himself alone, and not very drunk—than again he was filled with this delirium, and again he succumbed beneath the burden of it. And the longing for freedom ever grew and strengthened in him, torturing him by its force. But wrench himself free from the fetters of his wealth he could not. Mayákin, who held from him a full power of attorney to administer his business, now acted so that, almost every day, Fomá was compelled to feel the weight of the responsibilities which rested upon him. People were constantly applying to him for payments, proposing to him arrangements for transporting freight, the employees appealed to him in person and by letter about trifles with which he had not hitherto concerned himself, but which they had attended to at their own risk. They hunted him up in eating-houses, and asked him what must be done, and how it must be done; he told them, sometimes without himself understanding in the least whether the thing should be done in one way or another, he noticed their concealed contempt for him, and almost always saw that they did the business not as he had ordered, but in a different and better way. In all this he detected the clever hand of his god-father, and he comprehended that the old man was harrying him in order to incline him to his own views. But, at the same time, he remarked that he was not the master in his own business, but only a component part of it, and not an important part

at that. This irritated him, and still further repelled him from the old man, still more powerfully excited his yearning to break away from business, even at the cost of his own destruction. Goaded to fury, he flung money about in the restaurants and dives, but this did not last long—Yákoff Tarásovitch closed up his current accounts in the banks, and removed all deposits. Fomá soon felt that people were not as willing to lend him money on his note of hand as they had been at first. This stung his self-love, and thoroughly perturbed and frightened him, when he learned that his god-father had set afloat in business circles the rumor that he, Fomá, was not in his right mind, and that, possibly, it might become necessary to appoint a guardian for him. Fomá did not know the limits of his god-father's power, and could not bring himself to take counsel with anyone on the subject: he was convinced that the old man was a power in the business world, and could do anything he pleased. At first he found it painful to feel Mayákin's hand over him, but afterwards he became reconciled to this, dismissed the whole matter, and resumed his dissolute, drunken life, in which one thing alone consoled him—people. With every day he became more firmly convinced that they were senseless, and in every way worse than himself, that they were not the lords of life, but its lackeys, and that it was twisting them about at its pleasure, driving them and ruining them at its will, while they, apathetically and resignedly yielded to it, and not one of them desired freedom for himself. But he did not want it, and therefore he haughtily elevated himself above his boon companions, not desiring to discern in them anything but evil.

One day, in a restaurant, a half-intoxicated man complained to him about his life. He was a lean little man, with dull, frightened eyes, unshaven, and with a short frock-

coat, and a brilliant necktie. He blinked mournfully, his ears waggled timorously, and his soft little voice also trembled.

"I have used every means to become one of the successful people. I have tried everything. I have toiled like an ox. But life has jostled me, devoured me, given me no chance . . My patience is exhausted . . Ekh! And so, I have taken to drink. I feel that I am going to destruction. Well, that road is open to me!"

"Fool!" said Fomá contemptuously. "Why did you care to make your way, to be among the successful people? You ought to have kept to the right, away from them. You might have stood aside, looked to see where your place was among them, and then—advanced straight to your point!"

"I don't understand your words!" and the man shook his closely-cropped, angular head.

Fomá laughed conceitedly.

"How could you be expected to understand that?"

"Do you know, what I think about it is this, that he whom God appoints . ."

"Life is not arranged by God, but by people!" broke out Fomá, and he even surprised himself by the audacity of his words. And the little man, casting a furtive glance at him, also shrank back timidly.

"God gave you understanding?" asked Fomá, recovering from his confusion.

"Certainly . . that is to say, as much as befits a small man . ." said Fomá's interlocutor undecidedly.

"Well—don't you dare to ask of Him a single grain more! Construct your own life by your own reason . . and God will judge you . . . We are all in His service, and we are all of equal value in His sight . . Do you understand?"

It very often happened that Fomá said something which seemed audacious even to himself, and, at the same time, elevated him in his own eyes. They were bold, unexpected ideas and words, which suddenly made their appearance like sparks—an impression carved them, as it were out of Fomá's brain. And he more than once observed, with regard to himself, that he expressed what he had thought out worse, more obscurely, than what flashed up, impulsively from his heart.

Fomá lived as though he were walking in a swamp, in danger, every moment, of sticking fast in the mud and slime, but his god-father, like a bindweed, meandered about on one dry, firm little spot, maintaining a keen watch, from afar, on his god-son's life.

After the quarrel with Fomá, Yákoff Tarásovitch returned home sullenly thoughtful. His little eyes gleamed unfeelingly, and his whole person was straightened up, like a tightly stretched cord. His wrinkles writhed painfully, his face seemed to have grown smaller and darker of hue, and when Liubóff saw him in this state, she thought he was seriously ill, but was holding himself under control, exercising force upon himself. The taciturn old man flung himself about the room, hurling at his daughter, in reply to her questions, dry, curt remarks, and, at last, shouted at her, point-blank:

"Let me alone! You see—it doesn't concern you . ."

She felt sorry for him, when she perceived the grieved and mournful expression of his keen, green eyes; she considered it her duty to question him as to what ailed him, and when he seated himself at the dinner-table, she went up to him impulsively, laid her hands on his shoulders, gazed into his face, and asked anxiously:

"Papa! you are not feeling well—tell me!"

Her caresses were extremely rare; they always softened the lonely old man, and although he did not respond to them for some reason or other, yet he could not fail to prize them, all the same. And now, twitching his shoulders, and flinging off her hands, he said to her:

"Go away, go to your place . . The itching curiosity of Eve will be your undoing."

But Liubóff did not go away; gazing persistently into his eyes, she asked, in an offended tone:

"Why do you always talk like that to me, papa . . . as though I were a child, or very stupid?"

"Because you are grown up but are not very clever . . . There now! There's the whole matter in a nutshell! Go away, sit down, and eat . ."

She went away, and silently seated herself opposite her father, with her lips pursed up from the affront. Mayákin ate slowly, contrary to his wont, stirring his spoon around in his plate of cabbage-soup for a long time, and staring intently at the soup.

"If your littered-up mind could only understand your father's thoughts!" he said suddenly, sighing with a sort of whistling sound.

Liubóff cast her spoon aside, and asked, almost with tears in her voice:

"Why do you insult me, papa? You see that—I am alone! always alone! You must comprehend how difficult life is for me—and you never utter a kind word to me. You never say anything at all! But you are lonely also—and things are hard for you . . I see that. You find it difficult to live . . but,—you yourself are to blame for that!! You yourself . . ."

"Here's Balaam's ass taken to talking!" said the old man with a sneer. "We-ell? What comes next?"

"You are very proud, papa, of your brains . . ."

"What else?"

"That is not well . . and it gives me great pain . . why do you repulse me? You know that I have no one but you . . ."

Tears sprang to her eyes; her father noticed them, and his face quivered.

"If you weren't a girl!"—he exclaimed.—"If you only had some brains,—like Márfa the Burgomistress,[1] for example. . . . Ekh, Liubóff! Then I'd . . . I wouldn't care a fig for anybody—nor for Fómka . . . Come now, don't roar!"

She wiped her eyes, and asked:

"What is it about Fómka?"

"He's rebellious . . Ha-ha! He says: 'Take all my property from me, set me at liberty . .' He wants to save his soul—in pot-houses. That's what he has taken into his head—our Fomá."

"What does it mean?" asked Liubóff hesitatingly. She wanted to say that Fomá's desire was good, that it was a noble desire, if it were serious, but she was afraid of irritating her father by her remarks, and so she only looked inquiringly at him.

"What does it mean?" began Mayákin hotly, tremulously—"It's either the result of his drinking to excess, or else—which God forbid,—he gets it from his mother . . the Old Ritualist element. . . . And if that fantastic leaven begins to ferment in him, I shall have a lot of fighting to do with him! I shall have great trouble with him. He forcibly opposed me . . displayed great insolence, all of a sudden . . . He's young . . there's not much crafti-

[1] The famous defender of Novgorod, widow of Borétzky, Burgomaster; end of the fifteenth century.—*Translator.*

ness about him yet . . . He says: 'I'll drink up everything. I'll squander everything . .' . . I'll see you drink it up!"

Mayákin raised his hand above his head, and clenching his fist, gesticulated angrily with it.

"How dare you? Who established the business, who got it into shape? You? Your father . . he put forty years of toil into it, but you want to destroy it? . . We are all bound to go to our own places, here together, lined up like a wall, there cautiously, one after the other, in goose-file . . . We merchants, we trading people, have carried Russia on our shoulders for centuries, and are still carrying her . . . Peter the Great was a Tzar of divine wisdom . . he knew our value. How did he uphold us? He had little books printed, expressly to teach us business . . I have a book, printed at his command, by Polidor Virgilii Urbínsky, about inventions, printed in the year 1720 . . yes! One must understand it . . . He did understand . . and opened the way for us . . But now we stand on our own feet . . . and we know our place, instinctively. Open the way to us! We have laid the foundations of life —we have laid ourselves in the earth instead of bricks . . . now we must build the stories—grant us freedom of action! That's the direction in which such as we must hold our course . . That's where the problem lies . . but Fómka does not understand this. He must understand—and continue the work. He has his father's means.—I shall die—mine will be joined to his: work, you puppy! But he talks wildly. No, wait! I'll lead you to the proper point!"

The old man panting with agitation, and with flashing eyes, stared as angrily at his daughter as though Fomá were sitting in her seat. His agitation frightened Liubóff, but

she had not sufficient courage to stop her father, and she gazed in silence at his surly, gloomy visage.

"The road has been laid out by our fathers—and you must walk in it. Fifty years have I toiled—for what? That after I am gone my business shall come to an end . . . my children . . . My children! What children have I?"

The old man dropped his head sadly, his voice broke, and dully, as though he were speaking somewhere inside him, he said:

"One—is a convict . . . ruined . . the other—is a drunkard, and there's but little hope of him . . . My daughter . . . To whom shall I hand over my labor before I die? I ought to have a son-in-law . . When Fómka has got through fermenting, and is sharpened up,— . . I'll give you to him, and with you all I have—that I will! But Fómka isn't fit yet . . . And I see no other in his stead . . How men have degenerated! In former times, the people were of iron, but now they are of—india-rubber! They all bend . . . and they have nothing, they have no stability . . What does it mean? Why is it so?"

Mayákin gazed anxiously at his daughter. She remained silent.

"Tell me," he asked her, "what it is you want? How, in your opinion, ought one to live? What do you wish? You have been educated, you have read—what do you need?"

These questions showered down upon Liubóff's head quite unexpectedly to her, and she became confused. She was pleased that her father had asked her about the matter, but she was afraid to answer him, lest she should lower her prestige in his eyes. And so, collecting all her forces in a way, as though she were preparing to spring across the table, she said hesitatingly, and with a quiver in her voice:

"That everyone should be happy—and contented . . that all men should be equal . . . and that all should have an equal right to life . . to the good things of life . . all men need freedom—as much as they do air . . and in everything—equality!"

At the beginning of her agitated speech, her father gazed into her face with an anxious curiosity in his eyes, but in proportion as she hastily cast her words at him the expression of his eyes kept changing, and at last, he said to her with calm contempt:

"I knew it: you're a gilded fool!"

She dropped her head, but immediately raised it again, and exclaimed sadly:

"You say the same thing yourself: freedom . ."

"Hold your tongue, won't you!" roared the old man roughly at her.—"You don't even perceive that which forces itself to the outside plainly in every man . . . How can all men be happy and equal, if each one wishes to be above the other? Even a beggar has a pride of his own, and always brags to others about something . . . Even the little child wants to be first among his playmates . . And no man ever gives way before another man—only fools dream of such a thing . . Everyone has his own soul . . and his own face . . only those who do not love their souls and do not care for their faces can be planed down to one size. Ekh, you fool! You've read a lot and gobbled down a heap of trash . ."

Bitter reproach and biting scorn were expressed on the old man's face. Pushing his chair back noisily from the table, he sprang out of it, and, crossing his hands behind his back, he began to run about the room with mincing steps, shaking his head and muttering something to himself in a vicious, hissing whisper. Liubóff, pale with emotion and

anger, feeling herself stupid and helpless before him, listened to his whisper, and her heart beat anxiously.

"I am left alone . . alone . . Like Job . . O, Lord!—What shall I do?—A-lone! Ain't I clever? But life has outwitted me . . What does it love? Whom does it caress? It beats the good, and doesn't let the bad escape . . . And no one can understand its justice."

The girl was grieved, to pain, for the old man; she was seized with a terrible longing to help him; she wanted to be of use to him.

As she watched him with burning eyes, she suddenly said softly to him:

"Papa . . dear papa! Do not grieve . . surely, Tarás is still alive . . perhaps he . ."

Mayákin came to a sudden halt, as though rooted to the spot, and slowly raised his head.

"The wood was bent in youth, it couldn't stand the strain, and it's all the more likely to break in its old age . . Well, nevertheless . . Tarás is a blade of straw compared to me, even now . . It's hardly likely that he's any better than Fomá . . Gordyéeff has some character . . he has his father's audacity . . He can take a good deal on his shoulders . . But Taráska . . you recalled him in the nick of time . . so there!"

And the old man who, a moment before had been depressed in spirit to the point of complaining, who had been darting about the room, in his grief, like a mouse in a mousetrap, now walked firmly and composedly, with a careworn countenance, to the table again, carefully placed his chair before it, and sat down, saying:

"We must feel Taráska . . he is living in Usólye, at some factory . . I heard of it from some merchants—he's working in soda there, I believe . . I'll find out exactly. I'll write . ."

"Let me write to him, papa?" entreated Liubóff softly, trembling with joy, and flushing crimson.

"You?" asked Mayákin, darting a hasty glance at her, then he became silent, reflected, and said:

"You may! It is even better so . . Ask him if he is married. Ask him how he is living?—Yes, and by the way, I'll tell you when the time has come to write."

"You'd better be quick about it, papa!" said the girl.

"I'd better be quick about marrying you off . . I've been casting my eyes on a red-haired fellow—the young man appears not to be stupid . . He has been polished up abroad, among other things."

"Is it Smólin, papa?" asked Liubóff, with anxiety and curiosity.

"And if it is he—what then?" inquired Yákoff Tarásovitch in a business-like way.

"Nothing . . I don't know him," replied Liubóff hesitatingly.

"We'll introduce you . . 'tis time, Liubóff, 'tis time! Our hopes of Fomá are poor—although I don't give him up either."

"I do not reckon upon Fomá. What is he to me?"

"There's no use in your saying that. If you had had more sense, perhaps he wouldn't have gone astray! . . When I saw you together, I used to think: My lass is winning a young fellow for herself! 'Twill be a strong affair! On the contrary, . . I didn't foresee right . . I thought you would know what was to your own advantage, without any orders from me. So I did, my lass!" said her father, in a didactic voice.

She meditated, as she listened to his suggestive speech. She was strong and healthy, and the idea of marriage had entered her mind more and more frequently of late, for she

could see no other way of escape from her loneliness. The longing to abandon her father and go away somewhere or other, to study something, work at something,—she had long since lived down, just as she had lived down, alone by herself, many other longings, as acute but profound and ill-defined. The various books which she had read had left behind them in her a muddy sediment, but, although this had life about it, it was, nevertheless, the life of protoplasm. From this sediment within the girl there had been developed a feeling of dissatisfaction with her life, a yearning for personal independence, a desire to liberate herself from her father's burdensome tutelage,—but she had not the strength to put these desires into execution, nor a clear conception of how they were to be realized. But nature made its own suggestions, and more than once already, at the sight of young mothers with their children in their arms, the girl had felt within her a sad and offended languor. At times, as she halted before her mirror, she gazed with mournfulness at her plump, fresh face with dark circles round the eyes reflected in it, and she felt sorry for herself: she was conscious that life was avoiding her, forgetting her somewhere on one side. Now, as she listened to her father's remarks, she pictured to herself what sort of a fellow this Smólin might be? She had met him while he was still a student in the gymnasium; he had then been covered with freckles, snub-nosed, always neat, stately and tiresome. He danced heavily and awkwardly, and talked uninterestingly . . A long time had elapsed since then: he had been abroad, had studied something there,—what was he like now? From Smólin her thoughts leaped to her brother, and with a sinking heart she thought: What answer would he make to her letter? What was he like? The image of her brother, as she pictured him to herself, shut off from

her both her father and Smólin, and she was already saying to herself that, until she had met Tarás, on no terms whatever would she consent to marry, when her father suddenly shouted at her:

"Hey, Liubáva! Why are you thoughtful? What about, chiefly?"

"Nothing . . everything passes away so swiftly," replied Liubóff with a smile.

"What passes swiftly?"

"Why, everything . . . a week ago, it would have been impossible to speak to you about Tarás, but now . ."

"'Tis necessity, my lass! Necessity is a power, it bends a steel rod into a spring,—but the steel of stubbornness . . . Tarás—we'll have an eye on him! A man is of value in proportion to his resistance to the power of life . . if it doesn't wrest him, he wrests it to his own pattern,—my respects to him! Permit me to shake your hand and let's travel together on business! . . Ekh, I'm old . . But how brisk life has become now! It increases in interest with every year . . there's more and more savor to it! I'd like to go on living forever, I'd like to go on acting forever!"

The old man smacked his lips with gusto, rubbed his hands, and his little eyes gleamed with greed.

"But there you are—thin-blooded little folks! You haven't grown up yet, but you are already overgrown and live on wizened, like an old radish . . But the idea that life is becoming more and more beautiful all the time, is inaccessible to you. I have lived sixty-seven years on this earth, and am already standing on the brink of the grave, but I see: in the olden time, when I was young, there were fewer flowers on earth, and the flowers were less beautiful. Everything is adorning itself! What buildings have come

into vogue! Divers implements, of trade . . Steamers! A lot of brains has been put into it all! you look—you think: 'Hey there, you people, you are smart! like a lump of buckwheat porridge in the mouth! They've seized hold of life cleverly' . . Everything is good, everything is agreeable . . . only you, our heirs,—are destitute of every live feeling! Any little charlatan from among the petty burghers is smarter than you . . . There's that . . Ezhóff—what's he? But he represents judgment upon us . . and even upon all life . . he's gifted with boldness. But you—pshaw! You live like beggars . . in merriment you are beasts, in unhappiness—an abomination! Rotten people—you ought to have fire injected into your veins—you ought to have your skins flayed off you, and salt sprinkled on the raw flesh—then you'd jump, I think!"

Yákoff Tarásovitch, small, wrinkled, and bony, with black stumps of teeth in his mouth, bald and swarthy, as though tanned with the heat of life and smoked in it, trembled all over in vehement agitation, showering jarring, contemptuous remarks on his daughter—who was young, well-grown, and plump. She gazed at him with guilty eyes, smiling in perturbation, and in her heart her respect for the lively old man, so persistent in his desires, kept growing and growing.

But Fomá continued to rove about and talk wildly, spending his days and nights in eating-houses and dives, and adopting more and more deeply a contemptuously-inimical demeanor toward the people who surrounded him. At times, they evoked in him a melancholy yearning to discover among them some support for his malignant feeling, to meet a man both worthy and daring, who would put him to shame by his burning words of reproof. With every re-

currence, this yearning sprang up in him more and more clearly,—it was a desire for help on the part of a man who felt that he had gone astray and was going to destruction.

"Brethren!" he exclaimed once, as he sat at table in an eating-house, half-intoxicated, and surrounded by some shady and greedy people or other, who ate and drank as much as though they had not had a bite in their mouths for many a long day previously.—"Brethren! I'm disgusted with you,—I'm tired of you! Thrash me—turn me out! You are scoundrels, but you are more attached to one another than you are to me . . . Why? Surely, I am also a drunkard and a scoundrel . . but an outsider for you! I see that I am an outsider. You drink at my expense, and you privately don't care a fig for me—I feel it! Why?"

As a matter of course, they could not treat him otherwise: not one of them, probably, in the depths of his soul, regarded himself as lower than he, but he was rich,—that was what prevented their treating him more as a comrade, and he was always saying sneeringly-wrathful things,—and that embarrassed them. Moreover, he was strong and quick to use his fists,—they did not dare to say a word in contradiction of him. But that was precisely what he wanted, he more and more violently longed to have some one of them, whom he despised, stand up against him, face to face, and say something strong to him, that, like a lever, would turn him away from this down-hill road, of whose danger he was conscious—whose mire he saw, and was filled with impotent loathing for it.

And Fomá found what he needed.

One day, exasperated by lack of attention to him, he shouted at his boon-companions:

"You bugs! Shut up, every one of you! Who is it that provides you with drink and food? Have you forgotten?

I'll reduce you to order! I'll teach you to respect me! Jail-birds! I say—hush, all of you!"

They did become silent, in fact, being frightened, no doubt, at the possibility of losing his good-will, or, possibly, afraid that he, that healthy and powerful wild-beast, would thrash them. For a minute they sat silent, concealing their anger at him, bending low over their plates, and endeavoring to hide from him their alarm and confusion. Fomá surveyed them with self-satisfaction, and, gratified by their slavish obedience, he said, boastfully:

"Aha! You are tamed down . . that's right! I'm strict! I'm . ."

"A booby!" rang out a calm, loud exclamation.

"Wha-at?" roared Fomá, springing from his chair. —"Who said that?"

Then, at the end of the table, there rose up a strange, shabby man, tall, in a long frock-coat, with a heap of iron-gray hair on his enormous head. His hair was stiff, and stood out in all directions in thick tufts, his face was sallow, cleanly shaved, with a large hooked nose. He struck Fomá as resembling the swab with which steamer-decks are washed, and this amused the half-intoxicated young fellow.

"Go-od," he said, with a grin. "What are you snarling at, hey? Do you know who I am?"

The man, with the gesture of a tragic actor, stretched out toward Fomá his hand, with long, flexible fingers, such as jugglers have, and said, in a thick, hoarse bass voice:

"You—are the rotten illness of your father, who, although he was a thief, was a worthy man, nevertheless, in comparison with you."

Fomá panted for breath with surprise and wrath, he opened his eyes very widely and fiercely, and made no reply, being unable to find an answer to this insolence. But the

man, standing opposite him, encouraged, went on in a hoarse voice, ferociously rolling his large but faded and swollen eyes:

"You demand from us respect for yourself—you fool! How have you deserved it? Who are you? A drunkard, who has drunk up his father's fortune . . You savage! You ought to be proud that I, a celebrated artist, a disinterested and faithful servitor of art, drink from the same bottle with you! That bottle contains sandal-wood and molasses, impregnated with snuff, but you think it is port-wine. It is your commission to the rank of a savage and an ass!"

"Akh, you jailbird!" roared Fomá, rushing at the artist. But they seized him and held him back. As he wrestled in the embrace of the men who had clutched hold of him, he was forced to listen without replying, while the man who resembled a swab thundered, in his thick and heavy bass:

"You have flung a two-kopék piece at men, out of the stolen ruble and fancy yourself a hero? You are a two-fold thief: you have stolen the ruble, and now you are stealing gratitude for your two kopéks!—But I won't give it to you! I, who have devoted my whole life to the detection of vice, I stand before you and say to you boldly: 'You're a fool and a beggar, for you are too rich!' That is wisdom: all rich men are beggars. That is how the celebrated verse-writer Rímsky-Kannibálsky serves the truth!"

Fomá was now standing quietly in the midst of the men who surrounded him closely, and listened to the verse-writer's thunderous harangue, which now aroused in him a sensation that his sore spot was being scratched, and thereby the sharp itch of pain was allayed. Those present were agitated: some endeavored to stop the torrent of the verse-writer's eloquence, others tried to lead Fomá away some-

where. He pushed them aside in silence, and listened, more and more engrossed in the keen enjoyment of humiliation which he felt in the presence of these people. The pain which the verse-writer's words caused him, soothed the pain of his soul more and more, but the man thundered on, becoming intoxicated with the impunity of his condemnation:

"You think that you are the lord of life? You are—the base slave of the ruble."

Some one present kept yawning audibly, and, probably was displeased at himself for so doing, for every time he yawned, he swore:

"O, the dev-il!"

But compassion for Fomá awoke in an unshaven man with a fat face, or he grew tired of being present at this scene, and flourishing his hands, he drawled plaintively:

"Ge-en-tle-men! Sto-op it! It isn't ni-ice! For we are all sinners! Decidedly, all—believe me!"

"Come, go on!" muttered Fomá. "Say all! I won't touch you . ."

The mirrors on the walls reflected this drunken turmoil, and the people reflected in them seemed still more repulsive and disgusting than they were in reality.

"I won't!" shouted the verse-writer,—"I won't cast the pearls of truth and of my passion before you . ."

He broke away, and throwing back his head, walked toward the door, with tragic strides.

"Nonsense!" said Fomá, trying to follow him.—"Stop! You have disquieted me—now you must soothe me."

They seized him, surrounded him, and shouted something at him, but he darted forward, overturning them all. When he encountered tangible obstacles in his path, the conflict with them calmed him, concentrating all his feelings into one ardent effort—to overthrow what impeded

him. And now, after he had thrust aside all the people, and rushed out into the street, he was already less excited. As he stood on the sidewalk, he cast a glance at the street, and with mortification asked himself:

"How could he permit that swab to jeer at him, and revile his father as a thief?"

All around him everything was dark and still; the moon was shining brightly, and a light, refreshing breeze was blowing. Presenting his face to the cooling zephyr, Fomá, with swift strides walked against the wind, timidly glancing about him, and desirous that no one from the party in the eating-house should follow him: he understood that he had lowered himself in the eyes of all those people. He walked on reflecting to what a pass he had come: some swindler had publicly reviled him with infamous words, and he, the son of a celebrated merchant, had not been able, in any way, to pay him off for his derision.

"That's just what I need!" thought Fomá, dejectedly, with malicious delight.—"That's just what is needed! Don't lose your wits—understand . . And, then again, I brought it on myself . . I provoked them all . . So now,—take the consequences!" These thoughts rendered him painfully sorry for himself. Impressed and sobered by them, he strolled on aimlessly through the streets, persistently seeking in himself something strong, something firm . . But everything within him was obscure, and merely oppressed his heart, assuming no definite forms. As in an unpleasant dream, he reached the river, seated himself on some beams on the shore, and began to stare at the dark, tranquil water, covered with tiny ripples. Calmly, and almost noiselessly flowed the broad, mighty river, bearing on its bosom enormous burdens. It was all laden with black vessels, signal lights, and stars were reflected in its

waters; light little wavelets washed caressingly and with a soft murmur against the shore, directly beneath Fomá's feet. . . . The heavens inspired melancholy; a feeling of isolation took possession of Fomá.

"O, Lord Jesus!" he thought, gazing sadly at the sky.—"What a queer fellow I am . . . There's nothing in me, . . God put nothing in me . . Of what use is such a man as I? O, Lord Jesus!" [1]

Fomá felt somewhat relieved at the recollection of Christ, his loneliness seemed alleviated, somehow, and sighing with the full power of his breast, Fomá began to talk to God without words:

"O, Lord Jesus! . . . Some other men also do not understand, but they think they know everything, and so it is easier for them to live . . . But there is no excuse for me . . Here it is night . . but I am alone, and I have nowhere to go . . I cannot say anything to anybody, . . I love no one . . Only my god-father, and he has no soul . . If Thou wouldst only punish him in some way! . . He thinks that there is no one on earth wiser or better than himself . . and Thou sufferest this . . And I also suffer it . . If only some misfortune were sent to me . . if I could but fall ill . . . But I am well, I am . . like iron . . . I drink, I carouse—I live in filth . . . but my body does not even grow rusty, and only my soul aches . . . O Lord! To what end is such a life?"

Timid thoughts of protest made their way, one after another, into the mind of the lonely, erring man, but the silence around him only became more and more dense, and

[1] Fomá betrays that he is an "Old Ritualist" by pronouncing it: "Isus," instead of "Iisus," in the manner of the State Church.—*Translator.*

the night grew darker and darker. Not far from the shore lay a boat at anchor; it rocked from side to side, and something in it kept creaking, exactly like a groan.

"How am I to free myself from this sort of life?" meditated Fomá, gazing at the boat.—"And what occupation is assigned to me? Everyone works . . ."

And, all of a sudden, he was struck with an idea which was great to him:

"And hard labor is cheaper than light labor! One man puts the whole of himself into his work for a ruble, and another earns a thousand with his finger alone . ."

This thought aroused him pleasantly: it seemed to him that here he had discovered still another fraud in the lives of men, another deception which they concealed . . . He recalled one of his stokers—old Ilyá, who, for twenty kopéks stood watch over the furnace out of his turn, and worked for his comrade eight hours at a stretch, in the suffocating heat. One day, having fallen ill from over-work, he was lounging on the bow of the steamer, and when Fomá asked him why he was thus working himself to death, Ilyá replied roughly and sullenly:

"Because every kopék is more to me than a hundred rubles are to you, that's why."

And having said this, the old man heavily turned his body, burning with fever, with its back to Fomá.

Having paused over the stoker, his thought suddenly, and without effort, embraced all those petty people who toiled at hard labor. It was strange—why did they live? What satisfaction was it to them to live on the earth? All they did was to perform their dirty, arduous toil, eat poorly, they were miserably clad, addicted to drunkenness . . One was sixty years old but he still toiled side by side with young men . . And they all presented themselves to

Fomá's imagination as a huge heap of worms, who were swarming on the earth merely to eat. One after another there recurred to his memory his disagreements with these people, their remarks concerning life,—remarks which had been sometimes sneering and mournful, at other times hopelessly morose,—their wailing songs . . . And then he remembered how, one day, Efím had said to the clerk in the office who hired the sailors:

"The Lopukhín peasants have come to get a job, so don't you give them more than ten rubles a month. Their village was burned to the ground this summer, and now they are in dire want—they'll work for ten rubles."

As he sat on the beams, Fomá rocked his whole body to and fro, and out of the gloom of the river in front of him various human forms silently presented themselves—sailors, stokers, clerks, waiters from the eating-houses, half-intoxicated, painted women, habitual frequenters of the restaurants. They floated in the air like shadows, a damp and brackish odor emanated from them, and their dark, dense mass rolled onward as slowly, noiselessly, and tumultuously as autumnal clouds across the sky. The tranquil plashing of the waves poured into his soul like music sighing mournfully. Far away, somewhere on the other bank of the river, burned a bonfire; enclosed on all sides by the darkness, it was, at times, almost engulfed by it,—and through the gloom flickered a reddish spot, barely visible to the eye. But now the fire flared up again—the darkness gave way before it, and it could be seen flaming upwards. And again it was extinguished . . .

"O Lord, O Lord!" thought Fomá painfully and bitterly, as anguish wrung his heart ever more powerfully.—"And here am I, also,—entirely alone, like that fire. Only, there is no light from me, nothing but stifling vapor . . .

deadly fumes. I wish I could meet a sensible man . . I should have some one to talk with . . It is utterly impossible for me to live alone . . I can do nothing . . . I wish I could meet a man . ."

Far away, on the river, two large, crimson lights made their appearance, and above them a third. A dull roar proceeded thence, and something black moved towards Fomá.

"A steamer going down the river," he said to himself. "There may be more than a hundred people aboard her, and . . I have nothing in common with a single one of them . . They all know whither they are floating . . . They all have interests . . every one of them, I suppose, understands what he wants . . but what do I want? And who will tell me? Where is there such a man?"

The lights of the steamer were reflected in the river, and quivered there, the illuminated water flowed away from it with a dull murmur, and the steamer looked like a huge black fish with fiery fins.

A few days passed after this distressing night, and then Fomá started on another spree. It came about unexpectedly, and against his own desire. He had made up his mind to refrain from drinking, and had gone to dine in one of the expensive restaurants of the town, in the hope that there he would meet none of his familiar boon-companions, who always selected for their debauches the cheaper and less respectable places. But his calculation proved to be incorrect: he immediately ran into the joyously-friendly embrace of the vódka distiller who had taken Sásha as his mistress.

This man ran up to Fomá, embraced him, and burst into a cheery laugh.

"Here's a meeting for you! This is the third day I have

been taking my meals here, and it's tiresome in this oppressive loneliness . . There isn't a decent man in the whole town, so yesterday I struck up an acquaintance with the newspaper men . . I must say, they are a jolly set . . though, at first, they played the aristocrats, and kept sniffing at me, but afterwards, we all got smashing drunk . . And it shall be the same to-day—I swear it, by the fortune of my father! I'll introduce you to them . . There's one feuilleton-writer among them, you know—the one who lauded you that time—what's his name? He's an amusing little fellow—devil take him!—Do you know—you ought to hire one of that sort for your own use?! Give him so much, and order him to attend on you—'cheer me up!' That's a fine idea, isn't it? I had a verse-writer in my employ—and he made things very amusing, do you know . . . I used to order him 'Rímsky! make some couplets!' He'd begin,—and I tell you plainly,—he'd make you almost split with laughing.—It's a pity, he ran away somewhere . . Have you dined?"

"Not yet.—And how is Alexándra?"—inquired Fomá, somewhat stunned by the loud speech of this tall, free-mannered young fellow, with a red face and motley garments.

"We-ell, you know,"—returned the latter, with a frown,—"That Alexándra of yours is—a trash-woman! She's an obscure sort of person . . it's dull with her, devil take her! She's as cold as a frog, brr! I'm going to discharge her."

"She is cold,—that's true," said Fomá, and became thoughtful.

"Every man must manage his own business in the best possible way," said the vódka-distiller's son didactically,—"and if you become a man's mistress, you must do your duty

in the very best way . . if you are a respectable woman . . Well, sir, shall we have a drink of vódka?"

They had a drink. And, of course, they drank too much.

Towards evening, a large and noisy party assembled in the hotel, and Fomá, drunk, but sad and quiet, said to them, with twisting tongue:

"This is the way I understand it: some people are worms, others are sparrows . . . The sparrows are the merchants . . . They peck the worms . . That's their appointed task . . . They are necessary . . But I am of no use—neither are all of you . . We live without comparison—and without justification . . utterly at haphazard . . And we aren't needed in the least. But for what are those fellows,—and all people? We must understand that. Comrades! We shall all break! . . by heaven we shall! And why shall we break? Because of the superfluous that is always in us . . it's in our soul . . and our whole life is superfluous! Comrades! I weep . . . of what use am I? . . Kill me . . so that I may die . . I want to die . ."

And he shed copious, drunken tears. A fuddled little black-visaged man sat down beside him, and began to remind him of something, tried to kiss him, and shouted, as he pounded with his knife on the table:

"He's right! Hold your tongues! I'm wetting down the word. Give the word to the elephants and mammoths of the disorder of life! The raw Russian conscience makes saintly speeches! Roar away, Gordyéeff! Roar at everything! . ." And again he clutched hold of Fomá's shoulder, and flung himself on his breast, raising to Fomá's face his round, black, closely-cropped head, which waggled incessantly on his shoulders in every direction, so that Fomá could not get a look at his face, waxed angry with him on

that account, and kept pushing him away, shouting in irritation:

"Keep off! Where's your ugly phiz? Be off with you!"

Deafening drunken laughter encircled them, and the vódka-distiller's son, panting with mirth, roared hoarsely to some one:

"Come to me! A hundred rubles a month, board and lodging! My word of honor! Come! My word of honor! Spit on the newspaper . . I'll give you more!"

And everything swayed from side to side, with smooth, wave-like movements. The people now receded from Fomá, now approached him, the ceiling descended, and the floor rose upwards, and it seemed to Fomá that the next moment it would flatten him, crush him. Then he was conscious that he was floating off somewhere, on an illimitably-broad and tumultuous river, and staggering as he stood, he began to shout aloud in terror:

"Whither are we floating? Where is the captain?"

The answer to him was the loud, senseless laughter of the drunken men, and the sharp, repulsive cry of the black-visaged man:

"Right, sir! We're all without a rudder, without sails . . . Where's the captain? Wha-at? Ha-ha-ha!"

Fomá recovered from this nightmare in a tiny chamber with two windows, and the first thing his eyes lighted upon was a dead tree. It stood under the window; its thick trunk, stripped of its bark, and with a rotten heart, impeded the entrance of light into the room; its gnarled, black, leafless branches spread out mournfully and impotently in the air, and waved about softly, with a piteous squeak. Rain was falling, rivulets of water were pouring down the panes,

and could be heard falling from the roof to the ground and sobbing there. With this plaintive sound was mingled another, a shrill one, the constantly interrupted, hurried screech of a pen over paper, and a sort of spasmodic growl.

With difficulty turning his aching, heavy head on the pillow, Fomá perceived the little black-visaged man, sitting at a table, swiftly scratching with his pen on paper, shaking his round head with approbation, twisting it from side to side, shrugging his shoulders, with all his tiny body,—clothed only in drawers and night-shirt—moving incessantly on his chair, as though it were too hot for him to sit on, yet he could not rise, for some reason or other. His left hand, thin and slender, now vigorously wiped the perspiration from his brow, now made incomprehensible signs in the air; his bare feet shuffled on the floor, one of the sinews in his neck kept jerking, and even his ears were in motion. When his face was turned towards Fomá, Fomá saw thin lips, which were whispering something, a pointed nose which drooped over his scanty mustache, and this tiny mustache twitched upward every time the man smiled . . His face was sallow, swollen, wrinkled, and his black, vivacious, brilliant little eyes seemed not to belong to it. When he grew weary of gazing at him, Fomá began slowly to cast his eyes about the room. Upon large nails, driven into its walls, hung bundles of newspapers, which made the walls look as though they were covered with tumors. At some period or other, white paper had been pasted on the ceiling; it was puffed out like bladders, and torn, it had peeled off, and hung in dirty fragments; clothing, boots, books, torn bits of paper, strewed the floor . . The whole room produced the impression of having been scalded with boiling water.

The little man flung aside his pen, bent over the table,

drummed briskly on the edge of it with his fingers, and began to sing softly, in a weak little voice:

> "Ta-ake the drum, and have no fear!
> Ki-iss the vivandière more loudly!
> Of profoundest science that is the sense,
> 'Tis the sense of a-all philosophy!"

Fomá sighed heavily, and said:

"Can't I have a drink of seltzer water?"

"Aha!" exclaimed the little man, and springing from his chair, he found himself beside the broad divan, covered with oil-cloth, whereon Fomá was lying.—"Good morning, chum! Seltzer water? Yes! With brandy, or plain?"

"Better with brandy," said Fomá, shaking the dry, hot hand which was extended to him, and gazing intently into the face of the little man.

"Egórovna!" the latter shouted through the door, and turning to Fomá, he inquired: "Don't you recognize me, Fomá Ignátievitch?"

"I remember something . . as though we had met before . ."

"That meeting lasted for four years—but that was long ago!" Ezhóff . ."

"Heavens!" cried Fomá with amazement, raising himself on the divan.—"Is it really you?"

"I myself, my dear fellow, can hardly believe it, at times, but it's an actual fact—there's something which makes doubt bound back like an india-rubber ball from iron."

Ezhóff's face became absurdly distorted, and his hands, for some reason, began to fumble at his breast.

"We-e-ell!" drawled Fomá. "How old you have grown! Aï-aï-aï! How old are you?"

"Thirty."

"You look fully fifty . . lean, yellow . . Evidently, it is not sweet to live? And you drink, I see . . ."

Fomá felt sorry to see his merry, alert school-mate so worn out, and living in this dog-hole, which seemed to be swollen from burns. He stared at him, winking sadly, and saw that Ezhóff's face kept twitching constantly, while his little eyes blazed with irritation. Ezhóff was uncorking a bottle of seltzer-water, and thus occupied, maintained silence, holding the bottle tight between his knees and straining in the effort to extract the cork. And his weakness also touched Fomá.

"We-ell, life has robbed you . . Yet you were well-educated . . Evidently, man gets but little help from the sciences,"—said Godyéeff thoughtfully.

"Drink!" said Ezhóff, fairly turning pale with fatigue, and handing him a glass. Then he mopped his forehead, seated himself on the divan beside Fomá, and began:

"Don't attack science! Science is a divine beverage . . . but up to the present time, it has not got through fermenting, and is unfit for use, like vódka which has not been clarified from fusel oil. Science is not yet ready for man's happiness, my friend . . . and all that living people who use it get out of it is headaches . . that's the state of the case with you and me just at present . . . Why do you drink so rashly?"

"I? . . But what am I to do?" asked Fomá, laughing.

Ezhóff stared at Fomá searchingly, with his eyes puckered up, and said:

"Taking your question in connection with all you babbled last night, I assume, from my troubled soul, that you also, my friend, do not find a jolly life very jolly . ."

"Ekh!" sighed Fomá gravely, as he rose from the divan. —"What is my life like? Something outrageous . . I

live alone . . I understand nothing.—And I long for something. I want to spit in contempt on everything, and sink down somewhere, out of sight! I'd like to run away from everything . . . I'm bored!"

"This is curious!" said Ezhóff, rubbing his hands, and whirling completely round.—"This is curious, if it is true and deep, for it proves that the holy spirit of dissatisfaction with life has made its way even into the bed-chambers of the merchant-class . . . to the dead of soul, drowned in greasy cabbage-soup, in lakes of tea, and other liquids . . You must expound all that to me in proper order . . Then, my dear fellow, I will write a romance."

"I have been told that you have already written something about me?" asked Fomá, with curiosity, and again he attentively scrutinized his old chum, unable to understand how he, so pitiful a creature, could write anything.

"Yes, I have! Did you read it?"

"No, I did not have the chance . ."

"But what were you told?"

"That you abused me roundly."

"Hm . . Wouldn't it interest you to read it for yourself?"—persisted Ezhóff, staring point-blank at Gordyéeff.

"I'll read it!" Fomá said to encourage him, feeling embarrassed in the presence of Ezhóff, and that Ezhóff was offended by such treatment of his writings.—"In fact, it must be interesting, if it is about me, . ." he added, with a kindly smile at his comrade.

But, as he said this, he did not feel any interest whatever, and spoke thus only out of compassion for Ezhóff. What he felt was something entirely different: he wanted to find out what sort of a man Ezhóff was, and why he had become so worn-out?

This encounter had given birth in him to a tranquil and

kindly sentiment, had evoked memories of his childhood, and they now flickered through his memory,—flickered like tiny, unassuming little lights, timidly shining at him from the far-away past.

Ezhóff went to the table, on which already stood a boiling samovár, and silently poured out two glasses of tea as strong as tar, and said to Fomá:

"Come and drink tea . . And tell me about yourself."

"I have nothing to tell . . I have seen nothing in life . . My life is empty! You had better tell me about yourself—for I think you know more than I do . ."

Ezhóff pondered, never ceasing to twist his whole body about and to whirl his head. In meditation, only his face became motionless,—all the wrinkles on it collected together around his eyes, and encircled them, as it were, with rays, but this made the eyes sink still deeper under the brow.

"We-ell, my dear fellow, I have seen and I know a thing or two . . ." he began, shaking his head. "And I even know more than I ought to, and to know more than is necessary, is as injurious to a man as not to know that which it is indispensable that one should know . . . Tell you how I have lived? Yes—at least, I will try. I have never told anyone about myself, . . . because I never have excited interest in anyone . . . It wounds a man's feelings greatly to live in the world without exciting people's interest . . !"

"I see by your face, and by everything else, that you have not found life easy!" said Fomá, feeling pleased that, to all appearances, his comrade had not found life sweet any more than himself.

Ezhóff swallowed his tea at one gulp, dashed the glass down on the saucer, put his feet on the edge of a chair, and

clasping his knees with his hands, he laid his chin on them. In this attitude, small and flexible as rubber, he began:

"Student Satchkóff, who was my teacher, and is now a doctor of medicine, a vint[1] player, and a sneak, used to say to me, when I learned my lesson well: 'That's a fine fellow, Kólya! You're a gifted lad . . . We plebeians, poor and simple people, from life's back-yard, must study, and study, in order to stand at the head of all . . . Russia needs clever and honest men, strive to be such an one, and you will be the master of your fate, and a useful member of society. On us plebeians now rest the best hopes of the country, we have been called to introduce into it light, the truth . . .' and so forth. I believed him, the beast. And about twenty years have elapsed since that time—we plebeians have grown up, but we have not taken out any sense, and we haven't introduced any light into life. Russia is still suffering, as before, with her chronic ailment—a superabundance of scoundrels—and we plebeians gladly fill up their dense ranks. My teacher, I repeat—was a lackey, an impersonal, taciturn creature, who takes his orders from the mayor of the town,—but I am a clown in the service of society. Glory pursues me, my dear fellow, here in town.—I walk along the street, and I hear a cabman say to his fellow-cabby: 'There goes Ezhóff! He snarls viciously—the flies are biting him!' So-o then! To this also must one attain."

Ezhóff's face wrinkled up into a caustic grimace, and he laughed in a noiseless way, as though with his lips only. His speech was incomprehensible to Fomá, and, in order to say something, he remarked at random:

"You didn't attain to what you aimed at."

[1] *Vint* is Russian whist.—*Translator*

"Yes, I thought I should grow up bigger. And so I would! So I would, I say!"

He sprang from his chair, and ran about the room, exclaiming briskly and in a squeak:

"But, in order to keep oneself pure for life, and in order to be a free man in life—vast powers are required! I had them . . I had flexibility, dexterity . . I wasted all that merely with the object of learning something . . . which is perfectly useless to me now, I squandered the whole of myself in order to treasure up something within myself . . . O, the devil! I, and many others along with me, robbed ourselves for the sake of amassing something towards life . . . Just think of it,—wishing to make of myself a valuable man, I rendered my personality very cheap . . In order to study, and not perish with hunger, for six consecutive years I taught reading and writing to some blockheads, and endured a mass of meanness from various papas and mammas, who humiliated me without the slightest compunction.—As I earned enough for bread and tea only, I had no time to earn enough for boots, and applied to a philanthropic society with a most humble request for aid . . . in my poverty . . . If the benevolent people could only reckon up how much spirit they kill in a man by supporting the life of the body! If they only knew, that every ruble which they give for bread, contains ninety-nine kopéks of *poison* for the soul! If they could only be torn in pieces by the excess of the kindness and pride which they get out of their sacred activity! There is not on the earth a more disgusting and repulsive man than the one who bestows alms, as there is not a more unhappy man than he who accepts it!"

Ezhóff staggered about the room like a drunken man, seized with madness, and the paper under his feet rustled,

tore, flew into strips. He gnashed his teeth, twisted his head about, his arms dangled in the air like the broken wings of a bird, and it seemed as though he were being boiled in a kettle of hot water. Fomá stared at him with a strange, two-fold feeling: he was sorry for Ezhóff, and it pleased him to see how he was tortured.

"I'm not alone . . he is in straits also," thought Fomá, as an accompaniment to his speech. But something in Ezhóff's throat was jingling like broken glass, and squeaking like a hinge that needs oiling.

"Poisoned by people's kindness, I came to grief through the capacity possessed by every poor devil—the capacity for reconciling himself with little, in the expectation of much . . O! do you know?—more people perish through lack of setting a proper valuation upon themselves, than through consumption, and that is why, possibly, leaders of the masses serve as district police captains!"

"Devil take the police captains!" said Fomá, waving his hand. "Go ahead about yourself . ."

"About myself? I—that's all there is!" exclaimed Ezhóff, halting in the middle of the room, and beating his hands against his breast . .—"All I could accomplish I have accomplished . . I have attained to the rank of fun-maker for the public,—and I can do no more! To know what should be done, and not to be able to do it, not to have the strength for your work—that is what is called torture!"

"You don't say so! Wait a bit!" said Fomá, growing animated.—"Come, tell me, what one ought to do, in order to live calmly, that is to say, so that one will be satisfied with himself?"

"To that end, one must live uneasily, and avoid, like the plague, even the possibility of being satisfied with himself!"

These words had a big but empty sound to Fomá, and the sound of them died away without having stirred up in his heart any feeling whatever, without having begotten in his brain a single thought.

"You must always be in love with something which you cannot attain . . . A man becomes taller by stretching upwards."

Having now ceased to speak of himself, Ezhóff began to talk in a different tone, with more composure. His voice rang out firmly and confidently, while his face became stern and dignified. He stood in the middle of the room, his hand raised, with finger outstretched, and talked as though he were reading:

"People are base, because they strive to be full-fed . . The well-fed man—is an animal, for satiety is the self-conceit of the body. And self-conceit of the spirit also turns a man into an animal . ."

Again he twitched all over, as though all his sinews and muscles were suddenly subjected to a strain, and again he began to run about the room in seething agitation.

"The self-satisfied man is an indurated tumor on the bosom of society, . . he is my sworn enemy. He stuffs himself with cheap truths, worm-eaten morsels of musty wisdom, and exists, like a lumber-room, in which a miserly house-wife stores up all sorts of rubbish, which is perfectly useless to her, and of no use to anyone . . If you touch such a man, if you open the door into him, he will breathe upon you with the stink of decay, and into the air which you inhale, will pour forth a stream of some rotten trash or other . . These unhappy men are called men of firm mind, men with principles and convictions . . . and no one cares to notice that their convictions are merely underdrawers, wherewith they cover up the wretched nakedness

of their souls. On the narrow brows of such people there always shines the inscription which is familiar to everyone: 'Calmness and confidence'—a false inscription! Rub their brows with a firm hand, and you will see the real sign-board—on it is depicted: 'Narrowness and dulness of soul!'"

Fomá watched Ezhóff as the latter flung himself about the room, and thought sadly:

"Whom is he vituperating? I can't understand . . But he has been terribly wounded—that is plainly visible . ."

"How many such people have I seen!" shrieked Ezhóff with rage and terror. "How many such petty retail shops have been multiplied through life! In them you will find calico for shrouds, and tar, caramels, and borax to exterminate cockroaches,—but you will not be able to hunt out anything fresh, hot, healthy! You go to them with an aching soul, exhausted with loneliness,—you come thirsting to hear something vivifying . . . They offer you some warm cud or other, thoughts chewed up from books, and turned thoroughly sour with age. And all these dry, stale thoughts are so paltry that they require to express them an enormous quantity of sonorous, empty words. When such a man speaks, it seems to me: 'Here's a nag which is well-fed, but has been spoiled by injudicious watering, all hung round with sleigh-bells,—it's carting a load of rubbish out of the town, and—unhappy wretch!—it is satisfied with its fate!'"

"They, also, are superfluous people, of course," said Fomá. Ezhóff halted in front of him, and with a caustic smile on his lips, remarked:

"No, they are not superfluous, oh no! They exist as examples . . . to show what a man ought not to be. To tell the truth,—their proper place is in the anatomical

museums, where all sorts of monsters, various unhealthy deviations from the harmonious, are preserved. In life, my dear fellow, nothing is superfluous . . even I am necessary! Only those people in whose souls servile cowardice in the face of life has taken up its abode, in whose breasts, in place of a dead heart there is a huge abscess of the most abominable self-adoration,—only they are superfluous . . . . but even they are necessary, if only that I may pour out my hatred upon them."

All day long, until the evening, Ezhóff boiled, belching forth censure on men who were hateful to him, and his remarks,—although their drift was obscure to Fomá,—infected him with their evil flame,—infected him, and evoked in Fomá his pugnacious sentiment. At times there flashed up within him distrust of Ezhóff, and, in one of these moments, he asked him point-blank:

"Well—and dare you talk like that to men, to their faces?"

"On every convenient occasion. And every Sunday, in the newspaper. I'll read some of it to you, if you like?"

Without awaiting Fomá's answer, he tore down from the wall several sheets of newspaper, and, still continuing to run about the room, he began to read to him. He bellowed and squealed, he laughed and showed his teeth in a grin, and resembled a bad-tempered dog, who is tearing at his chain in impotent rage. Although he did not grasp the sense of his companion's compositions, Fomá was conscious of their daring audacity, virulent mockery, burning malice, and he found them agreeable, just as though he had been scourged in the hot bath with birch-besoms.

"That's clever!" he exclaimed, as he caught some detached phrase.—"Stoutly hurled!"

Every now and then there flashed past familiar names of

merchants and of distinguished citizens whom Ezhóff had stung, now boldly and keenly, now respectfully and with a sting as delicate as a needle.

Fomá's approbation, his eyes blazing with satisfaction, and his excited visage, inspired Ezhóff still more, and he kept roaring louder and louder, and bellowing, now falling on the divan, again springing up and rushing at Fomá.

"Come now, read about me!" shouted Fomá, bursting into a hearty laugh.

Ezhóff rummaged among a pile of newspapers, tore out a sheet, and grasping it in both hands, took up his stand in front of Fomá, with his legs straddling far apart, while Fomá lolled back in an arm-chair with a hole in the seat, and listened with a smile.

The article about Fomá started out with a description of the debauch on the rafts, and as the reading of it proceeded, Fomá began to feel that certain individual words stung him like gnats. His face grew more serious, he bowed his head, and maintained a surly silence. But the gnats came thicker and thicker . . .

"You used pretty strong language!" he said at last, much taken aback and displeased . . "You certainly will not win God's favor, simply because you know how to defame a man . . ."

"Shut up! Wait a bit!" snapped Ezhóff curtly, and continued his reading.

Having established in his article the fact that the merchant, in the matter of indecent behavior and the creation of scandals is, indubitably, the superior of the other social classes, Ezhóff inquired: "Why is this so?" and replied:

"It seems to me, that this tendency towards brutal pranks arises from a lack of culture, to the extent to which it is dependent upon excess of energy, and upon lack of em-

ployment. There can be no doubt as to the fact, that our merchant class,—with few exceptions—is the richest in health, and, at the same time, is the class which performs the least work . . ."

"That's true!" exclaimed Fomá, banging his fist upon the table.—"That's so! I have the strength of a bull,—and work enough for a sparrow."

"What is the merchant to do with his energy? Not much of it is expended on 'Change, and so he squanders the surplus of his muscular capital in pot-houses on debauches, because he has no conception of other, more productive and valuable points where his forces can be applied to life. He is still a wild beast, and life has already become for him a cage, and he finds himself hampered in it in view of his fine health and his inclination for expansive flourishes. Embarrassed by culture, the first thing you know, he starts on a career of debauchery. A debauch in the merchant class is always the mutiny of a captive wild beast. Of course, this is bad enough. But, ah! it will be still worse when this wild beast shall have added to his strength a little brains, and shall have disciplined it! Believe me—when that time comes, he will never cease to create scandals, but then they will become historical events. From such events, O God, deliver us! For they arise from the striving of the merchant after power, their object will be the omnipotence of one social class, and—the merchant will not be particular as to the means for the attainment of this object . . ."

"Well, what have you to say—is it true?" asked Ezhóff, when he had finished the paper and flung it aside.

"I don't understand the end of it, . . ." replied Fomá. "But what you say about strength is true! How shall I employ my strength, if there is no demand for it? We ought to fight brigands, or turn brigands ourselves—so that,

generally speaking, we might do something—very big indeed. And it ought not to be with our heads, but with our arms, and breasts . . But—to go to the Exchange, and use every means to acquire a ruble . . . And of what use is the ruble? And, again, what is it, anyway? Is life always arranged in that shape? What is life like, if everybody is grieving his heart out, and if everyone finds it oppressive? It ought to be according to people's taste, life ought . . It hampers me—consequently, I am bound to thrust it apart, in order that I may be more at liberty . . That is to say, it ought to be broken up and re-arranged . . . But how? That's exactly what bothers me! . . . What ought I to do, in order to live with more freedom? I don't understand,—and that's the end of me!"

"We-ell no-ow!" drawled Ezhóff.—"So that's where you've got to! It's a good thing, my dear fellow! Akh, I'd like to give you a little lesson! What do you think about books? Do you read any?"

"No, I don't like them—I have not read anything . ."

"You don't like them, simply because you haven't read them . . ."

"I'm actually afraid to read . . I have seen—there's one woman—it's worse than tippling with her! And what sense is there in books? One man imagines something and prints it, and other men read it . . If you're curious, that's all right . . . But, learn from books how to live—that's impossible. For man has written them, not God, and what laws and examples can a man establish for himself?"

"How about the Gospels? Men wrote them also."

"They were apostles . . Now there are none . ."

"I must admit that you answer pertinently! 'Tis true, my dear fellow, that there are no apostles . . . Nothing

but Judases are left, and miserable little specimens at that!"

Fomá felt delighted with himself, for he saw that Ezhóff was listening attentively to his remarks, and seemed to be weighing every word which he uttered. This being the first time in his life that he had met with such treatment, Fomá poured forth his ideas boldly and freely before his companion, paying no heed to the words, and feeling that he was being understood, because an effort was being made to understand him.

"Well, you are a curious young fellow!" Ezhóff said to him, a couple of days after their meeting . . "And, although you speak with difficulty, one feels that you've got a lot in you,—great boldness of heart! If you only had a little knowledge of the formalities of life! Then you would begin to talk loudly enough, I think . . yes, you would!"

"Nevertheless, you cannot cleanse yourself—you cannot liberate yourself with words," . . remarked Fomá with a sigh.—"Now, you said something about people who pretend that they know everything and can do everything . . I, also, know some of that sort . . My god-father, for example . . Somebody ought to set out and show them up . . They're a pretty mischievous sort of people . ."

"I can't imagine, Fomá, how you are going to live, if you retain within you that which you are carrying now . ." said Ezhóff thoughtfully.

"Things are difficult for me . . I have no stability . . I could do anything off-hand . . . I understand very well, that all people find things difficult and oppressive . . . and that my god-father sees that too,—I know! But he makes profits by his hampered state. It suits him! he's as sharp as a needle, and he'll make his way wherever he

chooses . . But I'm a big, heavy man—and so I feel suffocated! That's why I live in fetters . . And there's only one way for me to break loose from all—to make a good, strong movement with my whole body, and then all bonds will burst at once!"

"And what comes next?" asked Ezhóff.

"What comes next?"—Fomá reflected, and on reflection, waved his hand.—"I don't know what comes next—we shall see!"

"We shall see!" assented Ezhóff.

This little man, who had been scalded by life, was given to drink. His day began thus: After tea in the morning, he glanced through the local newspapers, and extracted from their reporter's comments material for his feuilleton, which he immediately composed, on the corner of his table. Then he ran to the newspaper office, and there cut up the country newspapers, constituting from these clippings "Provincial Sketches." On Friday, he had to write his Sunday feuilleton. For all this, he was paid one hundred and twenty-five rubles a month; he worked quickly, and devoted all his spare time to "the survey and study of pious institutions." In company with Fomá, he roved about until the dead of night among the clubs, hotels, and eating-houses, everywhere collecting material for his writings, which he called, "brushes for cleaning the public conscience." He called the censor, "the controller of the dissemination in life of truth and justice," his paper he called, "a go-between, engaged in introducing the reader to injurious ideas," and his own work on it—"the sale of a soul at retail," and "a tendency to audacity against divine institutions."

Fomá did not understand exactly when Ezhóff was joking and when he was speaking seriously—he discussed

everything hotly and passionately, he condemned everything harshly, and that pleased Fomá. But often, after beginning a harangue with passion, he contradicted himself with equal passion, and refuted himself, or wound up with some ridiculous freak. On such occasions, it seemed to Fomá that this man had about him nothing that he could love, and would take a deep root in him, and guide him. Only concerning himself did he talk in a rather peculiar voice, and the more hotly he spoke of himself, the more mercilessly and malignantly did he revile everybody and everything. And his relation to Fomá was two-fold—sometimes he encouraged him, and said to him, kindling and trembling all over:

"Go ahead! Refute and overthrow everything you can! Push forward, with all your might! You must know, that nothing is more precious than a man! Shout at the top of your voice: Freedom! Freedom!"

And when Fomá, taking fire from the blazing sparks of his speech, began to dream of how he should begin to refute and overthrow people, who, for the sake of their own profit, refuse to enlarge life,—Ezhóff often cut him short:

"Drop it! You can do nothing! Such as you are not needed . . . Your age—the age of the powerful, but not clever, has gone by, my dear fellow! You are belated . . There's no place for you in life . . ."

"No? You lie!" shouted Fomá, excited by contradiction.

"Well, what can you do?"

"I?"

"Yes, you?"

"Why . . I can kill you!" said Fomá wickedly, clenching his fist.

"Eh, what a blockhead!" ejaculated Ezhóff with con-

viction and compassion, shrugging his shoulders.—"Is that a business? I'm already half crippled to death. . . ."

And, suddenly blazing up with melancholy wrath, he twitched all over, and said:

"My fate has wronged me!—Why have I humbled myself, accepting the sops of the public? Why have I toiled for twelve consecutive years? In order to learn . . Why did I, for twelve years in succession, without a rest, swallow down in the gymnasium and the university dry and tiresome nastiness which was of no use to me, and was only revolting nonsense? In order to become a feuilletonist, in order that I might play the clown, day after day, amusing the public, and persuading myself that I am necessary, useful to it? . . Where is the powder of my youth? I have fired off the whole charge of my soul at three kopéks a shot . . What faith have I won for myself? Only the belief that everything in this life is of no use even to the devil, that everything ought to be broken up, pulled down . . . What do I love? Myself . . and I am conscious that the object of my love is not worthy of my love . . What can I do?"

He almost wept, and kept scratching his breast and neck with his thin, weak hands.

But sometimes a flood of courage took possession of him, and he talked in a different spirit:

"I? No, my song is not yet sung to the end! When I get my chest well inflated—I'll hiss like a scourge! Wait a bit. I'll abandon the newspaper, I'll take to serious work and write one little book . . . I'll call it—'The Book of the Departing Soul'; there is a prayer by that title—it is read over the dying. And this society, cursed with the curse of inward impotency before it expires, will receive my book like musk."

Fomá, by dint of listening to his every word, watching him, and comparing his utterances, perceived that Ezhóff was the same sort of weak, erring man as himself. But Ezhóff's mood still continued to infect Fomá, his harangues enriched Fomá's tongue, and, occasionally, to his joyful surprise, the latter observed how adroitly and forcefully he had himself expressed this or that idea.

He frequently encountered at Ezhóff's certain peculiar people who, so it seemed to him, knew everything, understood everything, and contradicted everything, in everything detected deceit and fraud. He contemplated them in silence, lent an ear to their remarks; their boldness pleased him, but he was repelled by some supercilious, haughty element in their demeanor towards him. Moreover, it was plainly apparent to him, that all the people in Ezhóff's room were better and more clever than those in the street, or in the hotels. They had special discussions, words, gestures for use in the room, and all these gave way, outside the room, to the most commonplace and human . . Sometimes, in the room, they all blazed like a huge bonfire, and Ezhóff was the most glowing firebrand among them, but the light of this bonfire only dimly illuminated the gloom of Fomá Gordyéeff's soul.

One day Ezhóff said to him:

"Today we will go on a spree! Our compositors have formed a union, and are going to take all their work from the publisher on a friendly contract . . There is to be a celebration of this, with a wetting down, and I'm invited . . . it was I who advised them to do it . . . Shall we go? . . You can give them a good treat . . ."

"I'll do it," said Fomá, to whom it was a matter of indifference with whom he spent the time which hung so heavily on his hands.

On the evening of that day, Fomá and Ezhóff found themselves sitting with smudgy faces, on the outskirts of a grove, outside the town. There were twelve compositors; they were neatly clad, and treated Ezhoff simply, as a comrade; and this somewhat surprised and abashed Fomá, in whose eyes Ezhóff was still something in the nature of a master or superior over them, while all of them were—his servants. They did not appear to notice Gordyéeff, although, when Ezhóff introduced him to them, they all shook hands with him, and said they were glad to see him . . He lay down apart under a hazel-bush, and watched them all, feeling that he was an outsider in this company, and perceiving that Ezhóff seemed, with deliberate intention, to have got as far away from him as possible, and was paying very little attention to him. He observed something strange about Ezhóff: the little feuilleton-writer appeared to conform himself to the tone and speech of the compositors. In company with them, he bustled about the fire, uncorked bottles of beer, chaffed them, laughed loudly, and endeavored, in every way, to resemble them. Moreover, he was more simply dressed than usual.

"Ekh, comrades!" he exclaimed dashingly . . "I'm at my ease with you! You know, I'm of no great account, either—nothing but the son of the janitor at the judicial building, non-commissioned officer Matvyéi Ezhóff!"

"What's he saying that for?" thought Fomá. "What difference does it make whose son he is—I suppose a man is respected for his brain, not on account of his father."

The sun set, and in the sky floated a huge, fiery bonfire, dyeing the clouds with hues of gold and blood. The forest breathed forth a damp odor, and tranquillity, but on its edge, the dark figures of men bustled to and fro. One of them, short of stature and lean of form, in a broad-brimmed

straw hat, began to play the accordion, another, with a black mustache and his cap tipped on the back of his head, sang an accompaniment in an undertone. Two others were tugging at a walking-stick, in a trial of strength. Several figures busied themselves with the baskets containing beer and provisions; a tall man with an iron-gray beard, flung branches on the fire, which was enveloped in a heavy, whitish smoke. The green branches, as they fell upon the fire, squeaked and snapped, but the accordion teasingly rattled off a merry tune, and the falsetto of the singer reinforced and completed its dashing performance.

Apart from them all, on the brink of a small excavation, lay three young fellows, and in front of them stood Ezhóff, saying, in ringing tones:

"You bear the sacred banner of labor . . and I, like yourselves, am a common soldier in the same army, we are all in the service of His Majesty, the Press . . and must live in firm, stable friendship . ."

"That's true, Nikolái Matvyéevitch!" some one's thick voice interrupted his harangue.—"And we want to ask you to work upon the publisher! Use your influence on him! Illness and drunkenness cannot be treated in exactly the same manner. But, according to his system, this is the way it comes out: if one of the fellows gets drunk, we pay a fine to the amount of his daily earnings, if he falls ill, we do the same . .[1] In case of illness, we ought to be allowed to present a doctor's certificate . . as a guarantee, and he, in justice, ought to pay the substitute one half of the sick man's wages . . Otherwise, it would come pretty hard for us, in case three were taken ill at once?"

[1] This is the system of the famous Russian *artel* or guild, such as these men had formed. The employer is guaranteed from loss through such circumstances as those mentioned, dishonesty, and so forth.—*Translator.*

"We-ell, of course, that is reasonable," assented Ezhóff. —"But, my friends,—the principle of co-operation . ."

Fomá ceased to listen to his comrade's speech, his attention being diverted by another discussion. Two men were engaged in it: one, a tall, consumptive, badly-dressed, angry-looking man, the other a youngish man, with golden-brown hair and beard.

"In my opinion," said the tall man sullenly, with an occasional cough, "that's stupid! How can men like us marry? There will be children—and will there be enough to support them? The wife must be clothed . . and what sort of a wife can a man get, moreover?"

"She's a splendid girl," said the brown-haired man softly.

"Well, she's nice now . . A betrothed girl is one thing—a wife is quite another . . . But that's not the main point, either . . . you can make the trial—perhaps she actually will turn out nice. Only—your means won't suffice . . . you'll break your own back with work, and you'll wear her out too.—Marriage is an utterly impossible thing for us . . Can we rear a family on such wages? Here, you see, . . . I've been married these four years, . . and my end is near. And I have seen no happiness . . nothing but anxiety and toil . ."

He began to cough, coughed for a long time, with a groan, and when he ceased, he said to his companion, with a sigh:

"Drop it—nothing will come of it."

The latter dropped his head mournfully, and Fomá said to himself:

"He talks sensibly . . it's evident, one can understand . ."

The lack of attention shown to him somewhat offended him, and, at the same time, it aroused in him a sentiment of respect for these men with dark faces impregnated with lead.

Almost all of them were carrying on practical, serious conversations, and certain peculiar words flashed through their speech. Not one of them tried to ingratiate himself with Fomá, or approached him with the importunities to which he had become accustomed in his tavern acquaintances, his companions in revelry. This pleased him . .

"What fine fellows they are," he said to himself, with an inward smile . . "they have a pride of their own."

"But, Nikolái Matvyéevitch," rang out a voice, apparently with a touch of reproach in it,—"you musn't judge from books, but according to the living truth . . . People toil for a bit of bread, you know, not according to any little book, but through necessity, and as God puts it into the soul to do, and not as is written down in your rules . ."

"Per-mit me, my friends! What does the experience of our colleagues prove . . ."

Fomá turned his head in the direction where Ezhóff, who had removed his hat, and was flourishing it above his head, was holding forth. But, at that moment, some one said to him:

"Move up closer to us, Mr. Gordyéeff!"

In front of him stood a short, squat young fellow, in a blouse and tall boots, looking into his face with a good-natured smile. Fomá liked the look of his broad, round face, with its thick nose, and returning the smile, he replied:

"I'll come closer . . But isn't it time for us to get nearer to the brandy? I brought about ten bottles with me—on the chance . . ."

"Oho!—Evidently, you're a real merchant . . . I will immediately communicate your diplomatic note to the company . ."

And he himself was the first to give vent to a loud, merry laugh, at his own words. And Fomá laughed also, con-

scious that a breath of merriment and warmth was being wafted to him, either from the fire or from the young man.

The sunset glow softly died away. It seemed as though yonder, in the west, a huge, soft, purple curtain were being lowered to the earth, uncovering the bottomless depths of the heavens, and the cheerful gleam of the stars, which twinkled in it. Far away, an invisible hand sprinkled lights over the dark mass of the town, and here, in silent composure, stood the forest, rising toward heaven like a black wall . . . The moon had not yet risen, and warm darkness lay over the fields.

The whole party seated themselves in a huge circle, not far from the fire: Fomá sat next to Ezhóff, with his back to the fire, and beheld in front of him, a row of brightly illuminated, merry, simple countenances. All were stimulated by liquor, but were not yet intoxicated; they laughed, joked, tried to sing, and drank, nibbling at cucumbers, bread and sausages the while. All this had for Fomá a certain peculiar, agreeable flavor; he grew bolder, infected with the general delightful mood, and became conscious of a desire to say something nice to these men, to please them all, in some way. Ezhóff, as he sat beside him, wriggled about on the ground, jostled him with his shoulder, and muttered something to himself, shaking his head the while.

"Brethren!" shouted the corpulent young fellow.—"Let's strike up a student song . . now, one, two! . .

"Swift, a-as the wa-aves. . . "

Some one droned in a bass voice:

"O-o-our da-a-ays. . ."

"Comrades!" said Ezhóff, rising to his feet, glass in hand. He staggered, and propped himself with his other

hand on Fomá's head. The song which had just been begun, was broken off, and all turned their heads toward him.

"Workingmen! Permit me to say a few words to you . . . words from the heart . . I am happy with you! I feel at my ease among you . . That is because you are men of toil, as to whose right to happiness there is no doubt whatever, although it is not acknowledged. In your healthy, soul-stimulating society, my honest men, the lonely man, whom life is hounding, breathes so well, so freely . . ."

Ezhóff's voice trembled, jingled, and his head began to shake. Fomá felt something warm trickle across his hand, and glanced at the contracted countenance of Ezhóff, who resumed his harangue, quivering all over:

"I—am not the only one . . there are many like me, persecuted by Fate, smitten down, ailing . . We are more unfortunate than you, because we are weaker in body, and in soul, but we are stronger than you, because we are armed with knowledge . . . which we have no chance to apply . . . We are all ready and glad to come to you, and to give ourselves to you, and help you to live . . there is nothing else for us to do! Without you, we have no ground under foot, without us, you have no light! Comrades! We were created by Fate itself to complete each other!"

"What is he asking from them?" thought Fomá, as he listened in amazement to Ezhóff's speech. And, casting a glance around him at the compositors, he perceived that they also were gazing at the orator in an inquiring, astounded, bored manner.

"The future is yours, my friends!"—said Ezhóff, shaking his head unsteadily and sadly, as though out of compassion for the future, and, against his will, resigning the power over it to these men.—"The future belongs to the

men of honest toil . . You have a great work before you! You must create a new culture . . everything free, vital and clear! I, who am one of you in flesh and spirit, a soldier's son, propose a toast: Let us drink to your future! Hur-rah-rah!"

Ezhóff, taking a sip from his glass, dropped heavily to the ground. The compositors unanimously took up his broken exclamation, and a mighty, thunderous shout rolled through the air, making the very leaves on the trees to shake.

"Now for a song!" the corpulent young man offered a second suggestion.

"Go ahead!" chimed in two or three voices. A noisy dispute ensued as to what should be sung. Ezhóff listened to the uproar, and, turning his head from side to side, he scrutinized them all.

"Brothers!" he suddenly shouted.—"Answer me . . say a few words in reply to my speech of welcome."

Again—though not all at once, all became silent, and stared at him, some with curiosity, others dissimulating a grin, several with dissatisfaction plainly expressed on their faces. But he rose again to his feet, and said excitedly:

"Here are two of us . . . outcasts from life,—I, and this man here . . . We both want . . . one and the same thing . . regard for man . . the happiness of feeling that we are useful persons . . . Comrades! This big, stupid man also . . ."

"Don't insult your guest, Nikolái Matvyéevitch!" rang out a thick, displeased voice.

"Yes, that's no good!" chimed in the corpulent young man, who had invited Fomá to the fire.—"Why say insulting words?"

A third voice remarked loudly and distinctly:

"We assembled together to have a good time . . to rest . . ."

"Blockheads!" laughed Ezhóff feebly . . "Amiable blockheads! . . Are you sorry for him? But do you know who he is? He's one of the men who suck your blood . . ."

"Stop that, Nikolái Matvyéevitch!" the men shouted at Ezhóff. And they began to talk with a humming drone, paying no further attention to him. Fomá was so sorry for his chum that he did not even take offence. He saw that the men who had defended him from Ezhóff's attacks were now deliberately refraining from taking any notice of the feuilleton-writer, and understood that if Ezhóff were to perceive this he would feel pained. And, with the object of getting his companion out of the way of possible unpleasantness, he nudged him in the ribs, and said, with a good-natured laugh:

"Well, you reviler . . . shall we have a drink? Or, perhaps it is time to go home?"

"Home? Where is the home of a man who has no place among men?" asked Ezhóff, and again began to shout:—"Comrades!"

His shout was drowned in the universal murmur, and remained without response. Then he hung his head, and said to Fomá:

"Let's get away from here!"

"Come along, then . . Though I'd like to sit a little longer . . It's curious . . Those devils behave themselves like well-born gentlemen . . they do, by God!"

"I can't stand any more: I feel chilled, suffocated . ."

"Well, come on!"

Fomá rose to his feet, pulled off his cap, and making a bow to the compositors, he said loudly and cheerily:

"Thanks for your hospitality, gentlemen! Good-bye!"

They immediately flocked round him, and persuasive voices made themselves heard:

"Stay a little longer! Why must you go? We might all sing, hey?"

"No, I must go . . it would be awkward for my comrade alone . . I am going to escort him. I wish you a jolly carouse!"

"Ekh, you ought to stay!" exclaimed the fat young man, and added in a low whisper: "he can get home alone . ."

The consumptive man also said in an undertone:

"Do you stay . . . We'll escort him to town, and there we'll put him in a drozhky—and done with!"

Fomá would have liked to remain, and, at the same time, was afraid of something. But Ezhóff rose to his feet, and clutching hold of his coat-sleeve, muttered:

"Le-et's go . . devil take them!"

"Until we meet again, gentlemen! I'm going," said Fomá, and took his departure, accompanied by exclamations of polite regret.

"Ha-ha-ha!" laughed Ezhóff, when he had got about twenty paces from the fire.—"They bid us farewell with grief, but they are glad I am gone . . I prevented their turning themselves into beasts."

"You did, that's so . ." said Fomá.—"Why do you fling your harangues around? The men met together to enjoy themselves, but you nag them . . It bores them . ."

"Shut up! You don't understand anything about it!" shouted Ezhóff sharply.—"You think I am drunk? It's my body that is drunk . . but my soul is sober . . it's always sober, and always has its feelings . . O, how much

there is in the world that is hideous, obtuse and pitiful! And men—stupid, unhappy men . . ."

Ezhóff halted, and seizing his head in his hands, stood still for a minute, reeling on his legs.

"We-ell, ye-es!" said Fomá slowly.—"They are very unlike each other . . Now there are these men . . They are polite . . . Gentlemen, in their way . . And they reason correctly . . and all that sort of thing. They have sense . . . Yet—they are only workingmen."

In the darkness behind them, the men struck up a powerful choral song. Discordant, at first, it kept swelling and swelling, and now it poured out in a broad, cheery wave of sound upon the cool night air above the deserted meadow.

"O, my God!" said Ezhóff softly and sadly, with a sigh. "How is a man to live? To what shall his soul cling? Who shall slake his thirst for friendship, brotherhood, love, pure and holy toil? . . ."

"These are simple, individual men," said Fomá slowly and meditatively, paying no heed to his companion's remarks, engrossed as he was in his own thoughts,—"if you take a good look at them, there's nothing special about them! It's really very . . It's curious . . . Peasants . . workingmen . . if one takes them as simply as that, they're just the same as horses. They carry burdens . . ."

"They bear all our life on their humped backs!" cried Ezhóff, with irritation . .—"They carry it like horses—submissively, stupidly . . And that submissiveness of theirs is our misfortune, our curse . ."

But Fomá, carried away with his idea, argued:

"They bear burdens, they toil all their lives for a mere trifle . . And, all of a sudden, they say something that you'd never think out for yourself in a century . . Evi-

dently, they have feelings . . . We-ell, ye-es, their company is interesting."

Ezhóff staggered along for some time in silence and, all at once, in a queer sort of dull, hiccupping voice, which seemed to proceed from his belly, he began to recite, waving his hand in the air the while:

"Life has cruelly deceived me
And many are the woes I've undergone . . ."

"I made those verses, my dear fellow," he said, pausing, and mournfully shaking his head.—"What comes next? I've forgotten . . Something is said about tears . . about pure and sacred longings . . . they are stifled in my breast by the foul reek of life . . . E-e-ekh!

"Within my breast there ne'er will wake again [1]
The swarm of dreams that in it buried lie . ."

My dear fellow, you are happier than I, for you are stupid . . . But I . . ."

"Stop your howling!" said Fomá irritably.—"Just listen how they are singing."

"I won't listen to other people's songs," said Ezhóff, with a negative shake of the head . .—"I have one of my own —the song of a soul exhausted with grief by life . . ."

And he began to yell, in a savage voice:

"Within my bre-east there ne'er will wa a-ake a-again
The swa-arm of dreams that in it bu-uried lie . .
There are many of them there!"

"There was a whole flower-garden of vivid, brilliant dreams, hopes . . . They died . . . withered and

[1] This composition has a certain amount of rhyme in the original, but its merit does not make an attempt at a rhymed English version worth the while.—*Translator.*

died . . . Death is in my heart . . . The corpses of the dreams are rotting there . . o-o!"

Ezhóff began to weep, sobbing like a woman. Fomá was sorry for him, and uncomfortable with him. Giving Ezhóff's shoulder an impatient jerk, he said:

"Stop that! Come along . . What a weak creature you are, brother . . ."

Grasping his head in his hands, Ezhóff straightened up his stooping form, and again broke out into wild and mournful song:

"There are many of them there!
The vault's too narrow for them the-ere!
In the shrouds of rhyme I clo-othed them . .
And about them many ballads
Sad and mournful have I su-ung!"

"O Lord!" sighed Fomá in despair.—"Stop that . . For Christ's sake! You make a man melancholy, by heaven you do!"

Athwart the gloom and silence, the rousing choral song was wafted to them from afar. Some one was whistling in time with the refrain, and the sharp whistle, which pierced the car, outstripped the billow of powerful voices. Fomá glanced in that direction, and beheld the lofty black wall of forest, the fiery dot of the fire as it flickered against it, and the shadowy figures grouped around it. The wall of forest was like a breast, and the fire was like a bloody wound in it. It seemed as though the breast were quivering, trickling with blood, which was flowing over it in hot streams. Encircled by thick darkness on all sides, the men against the background of the forest looked like little children, they, also, appeared to be in a blaze, all covered as they were with the flame of the fire, and they were flourishing their arms and singing their song loudly, vigorously.

But Ezhóff, as he stood beside Fomá, said rebelliously:

"You unfeeling blockhead! Why do you repulse me? You ought to listen to the song of a dying soul . . and weep over it . . . for, why was it wounded, why is it dying? Begone from me . . begone! You think I'm drunk? I'm poisoned . . take yourself off!"

Fomá, without removing his eyes from the forest and the fire which were so beautiful in the darkness, retreated a few steps from Ezhóff, and said quietly to him:

"Don't be foolish . . why are you cursing at random?"

"I want to be alone and—finish singing my song . ."

He also, with nervous footsteps, retreated from Fomá, and a few seconds later, he again began to shout in a wailing voice:

"My song is done, and nevermore will I
Disturb their sleep of death . . .
Lord! give rest unto my-y so-oul!
Ill be-eyond ho-ope it li-ies . .
Lord . . give rest unto my-y so-oul . . ."

Fomá shivered at the sounds of that gloomy howl, and briskly followed Ezhóff; but before he could overtake him, the little feuilleton-writer gave vent to a hysterical shriek, flung himself face-down upon the ground, and burst out sobbing piteously and softly, as ailing children cry . .

"Nikoláí!" said Fomá, raising him up by his shoulders . . "Stop . . . what's the meaning of this? O Lord! . . Nikoláí! Enough of that . . aren't you ashamed!"

But Ezhóff was not ashamed; he flopped about on the ground like a fish just pulled out of the water, and when Fomá lifted him to his feet, he pressed close to the latter's breast, grasping his sides with his thin hands, weeping all the while . .

"Come, that'll do!" said Fomá through his tightly clenched teeth. "Have done, my dear man."

And agitated by the suffering of the man who had been tortured by the narrowness of life, full of anger on his account, he turned his head in the direction where the lights of the town were gleaming, and in an outburst of malignant grief, he roared, in a thick, loud voice:

"A-a-ana-thema! Curse you! Just wait . . and you shall choke! Curse you!"

XI

"LIUBÁVKA!" said Mayákin one day, when he came home from 'Change, "prepare yourself this evening—I'm going to bring your bridegroom! Arrange a nice hearty little feast for us . . Set out as much of the old silver on the table as you can . . . take out the fruit-dishes also . . I want him to be impressed with our table! Let him see that everything we have is a rarity!"

Liubóff was sitting at the window, darning her father's socks, and her head was bent low over her work.

"What is the necessity for all that, papa?" she inquired, displeased and offended.

"Why, for sauce . . . for flavor . . And it's the proper thing to do. Moreover, a lass is not a horse, you can't get her off your hands without the harness . ."

Liubóff threw up her head nervously, and flinging her work from her, she gazed at her father, all crimson with indignation . . . and then, taking the socks into her hand again, she bent her head still lower over them. The old man stalked about the room, plucking at his fiery beard in a preoccupied manner; his eyes were fixed on something in the far distance, and it was obvious that he was completely engrossed in some great and complicated calculation. The young girl comprehended that he would not listen to her, and that he did not wish to understand how humiliating his words were for her. Her romantic dreams of a husband-friend, an educated man, who would peruse with her

clever little books, and help her to analyze her confused aspirations, were stifled within her by her father's irrevocable decision to marry her to Smólin, had been killed, had decomposed and been precipitated, leaving a bitter sediment in her soul. She had become accustomed to look upon herself as something better and higher than the ordinary young girl of the merchant class,—the empty-headed, stupid young girl, who thinks solely of finery, and almost always marries in accordance with the calculations of her parents, and rarely in accordance with the free choice of her own heart. And now, here was she herself about to marry merely because it was high time, and because her father needed a son-in-law, a successor in his business. But her father, evidently, thought that she, by herself, was not capable of attracting the attention of a man, and was going to deck her out with silver. Much perturbed, she worked nervously, pricked her fingers, broke her needles, but remained silent, well aware that her father's heart would be deaf to anything she could say.

But the old man still continued to stride about the room, now humming psalms in an undertone, now impressively instructing his daughter how she ought to behave towards her bridegroom. And, at the same time, he kept calculating something on his fingers, frowning and smiling.

"Mm . . precisely so, sir! . . . Judge me, O God, and plead my cause . . deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man . . Ye-e-es . . Put on your mother's emeralds, Liubóff."

"Do stop, papa!" exclaimed the young girl, in anguish . . "Pray drop the subject . ."

"Don't you kick! Listen to your lesson . . ."

And again he plunged into his calculations, puckering up his green eyes, and wiggling his fingers in front of his face.

"It reckons up thirty-five per cent . . . mm . . . a sharp young fellow . . Send Thy li-i-ight and Thy truth . ."

"Dear papa!" cried Liubóff sadly and timidly.

"What?"

"You . . are you very much pleased with him?"

"Who?"

"Smólin."

"Smólin? We-ell, ye-es . . he's a ro-ogue . . he's a capable young fellow . . a fi-ine merchant! Well, I'm off now . . So you attend to it—equip yourself . ."

When she was left alone, Liubóff flung aside her work, and leaned against the back of the chair, shutting her eyes tightly. Her firmly clasped hands lay on her knees, and her fingers fairly cracked with the strain. Filled with the bitterness of wounded self-love, she felt painfully afraid of the future, and prayed silently:

"O my God! O Lord! . . If he were only a well-bred man! Make him well-bred . . sincere. O God! Some man or other comes and looks you over and—takes you to himself for long, long years . . if you please him! How infamous it is . . . how terrible . . O God, my God! If I could only—run away! . . I wish I had some one to advise me . . what to do? Who is he? How am I to know him? I can do nothing! But I have thought . . I have thought so much! I have read . . Why have I read? Why should I know that it is possible to live otherwise—as I cannot live? But . . perhaps if it were not for the books . . I should find it . . . I might live more easily . . . simply . . . What a torture all this is! What a wretched . . . unhappy creature I am! . . Alone. If Tarás were only here . . ."

At the recollection of her brother, she felt still more in-

dignant, still more sorry for herself. She had written Tarás a long, exultant letter, wherein she had spoken of her love for him, of her hopes based on him; she had entreated her brother to come as speedily as possible to see his father, she had sketched out plans for their life together, assuring Tarás that his father—was a very clever man, and would understand everything; she had told about his loneliness, had indulged in raptures over his adaptability to life, and, at the same time, had complained of his treatment of herself.

For two weeks she tremulously awaited a reply, and when it had arrived and she had read it,—she had cried herself into hysterics with joy and disappointment. The answer was dry and brief; in it, Tarás announced that, in the course of a month, he would be on the Vólga on business, and would make a point of calling on his father, if the old man really had no objection to his doing so. The letter was cold as a block of ice; she read it over several times, in tears, and crumpled it, and twisted it up, but it did not grow any the warmer in consequence, but only got wet through. From out of the sheet of stiff writing-paper, written in a large, firm hand, there seemed to gaze forth upon her a wrinkled, gaunt, angular face, scowling with suspicion, like her father's face.

On Yákoff Tarásovitch the letter of his son produced an entirely different impression. On learning that Tarás had written, the old man gave a great start, and turned hastily to his daughter, with much vivacity, and a peculiar little smile:

"Come now! Give it here! Show it to me! Let's read how wise men write . . . Where are my spectacles? Mm . . . 'Dear Sister!' We-ell . . ."

The old man ceased; he read his son's epistle to himself,

laid it on the table, and elevating his brows very high, he walked about the room with an amazed visage. Then he read the letter again; drumming thoughtfully with his fingers on the table, he remarked:

"That's all right . . it's a judicious letter . . without any superfluous words. What of it? Perhaps the man has really hardened, out in the cold . . The cold is severe there. Let him come . . we'll have a look at him . . I'm curious . . . Ye-es . . In a Psalm of David it is said concerning the mysterious dealings of his son: 'When Thou didst turn back mine enemy again . . .' I've forgotten what comes next . . . 'The weapons of the enemy have grown weak at the last . . and his memory hath perished with a noise . .' Well, we'll converse with him without any noise . ."

The old man tried to speak calmly and with a contemptuous smile, but the smile did not appear on his face, the wrinkles quivered with excitement, and his little eyes seemed to gleam with peculiar brilliancy.

"Write to him again, Liubávka . . tell him to go ahead—to come fearlessly . ."

Liubóff wrote again to Tarás, but this time the letter was brief and composed, and now she was expecting an answer any day, and trying to picture to herself what he must be like, this mysterious brother of hers? Formerly she had been wont to think of him with a sinking of the heart, with that devout respect with which believers think of ascetics, persons of upright life—but now she felt afraid of him, for, at the cost of severe sufferings, at the cost of his youth, wasted in exile, he had acquired the right to judge both life and people . . . He would come, and ask her:

"Of course, you are marrying of your own free will, for love?"

What should she say to him? Would he pardon her pusillanimity? And why was she marrying? Was this, in reality, the only thing she could do in order to alter her life?

One after another, melancholy thoughts arose in the young girl's mind, and confused and tortured her, powerless as she was to oppose them with any definite, irresistible desire. Although seized with an anxious and nervous mood, although she was on the verge of despair, nevertheless she half-unconsciously but punctually fulfilled her father's commands: she decked the table with ancient silver and rare crystal, donned a silk gown, and seating herself before her mirror, began to place in her ears huge emeralds—a family heirloom of the Princes of Georgia, which had remained in Mayákin's hands as surety for a loan, together with many other precious things.

As she gazed into the mirror at her agitated face, whose large and luscious lips looked handsomer than ever amid the pallor of her cheeks, as she scrutinized her superb bust, closely enfolded by the silk, she felt conscious that she was beautiful and worthy of the attention of any man, whoever he might be. The green stones sparkling in her ears affronted her, as superfluous, and, in addition, it struck her that their gleam cast a slight tinge of yellow upon her neck. She removed the emeralds from her ears, replacing them with small rubies, and meditating all the time about Smólin—what sort of a man he might be? What was his character? What did he wish? Did he read books?

Then the dark circles under her eyes displeased her, and she began carefully to sprinkle them with powder, without ceasing to think about the misfortune of being a woman, and reproaching herself with lack of will-power. When the spots around her eyes were covered with a layer of paint

and powder, it struck Liubóff that this had robbed her eyes of their brilliancy, and she wiped off the powder . . A last glance in the mirror convinced her that she was strikingly beautiful,—beautiful with the amiable and durable beauty of the resinous pine-tree. This agreeable conviction somewhat calmed her tremulous mood, and she entered the dining-room with the stately mien of a wealthy bride who knows her own value.

Her father and Smólin had already arrived.

Liubóff paused for a second in the door-way, prettily narrowing her eyes, and proudly compressing her lips. Smólin rose from his chair, went to meet her, and made a respectful bow. The bow pleased her—it was low and graceful; she was pleased, also, by the costly frock-coat, which fitted Smólin's flexible figure beautifully . . He had not changed much—he was the same red-headed, closely-cropped, much-freckled person as of yore; only, his mustache had grown out long and luxuriant, and his eyes seemed to have become larger.

"What do you think of him? hey?" shouted Mayákin at his daughter, pointing at her suitor.

But Smólin pressed her hand, and smiling, said, in a ringing baritone voice:

"I venture to hope that you have not forgotten your old play-mate?"

"All right! . . You can talk together later on—" said the old man, testing his daughter with his eyes.—"You may attend to your duties here, for the present, Liubáva, while he and I finish our little confab. Come—now, Afrián Mítritch, explain yourself . ."

"Will you excuse me, Liubóff Yakóvlevna?" inquired Smólin suavely.

"Pray do not stand on ceremony," said Liubóff.

"He's courteous and adroit!" she commented to herself, and as she walked about the room, from side-board to table, she began to lend an attentive ear to Smólin's remarks. He talked softly, confidently, with a simplicity in which was to be detected condescension towards his interlocutor.

"Well then—for about four years I diligently studied the position of Russian leather in foreign markets. It's a very dismal and dreadful position! Thirty years ago, our leather was regarded there as the standard, but now the demand for it is constantly decreasing, and, of course, the price also. But this is perfectly natural—for in the absence of capital and knowledge, all these petty leather-producers cannot possibly raise their product to the proper degree of merit, and, at the same time, make it more cheaply . . Their goods are shockingly bad and dear . . And they are all guilty, in the sight of Russia, of having ruined her reputation as the manufacturer of the best leather. Therefore, to speak in a general way, the petty producer, who has neither capital nor technical knowledge, is placed in a position where it is impossible for him to improve his products in conformity with the development of the technical branch, —and such a producer is a misfortune for the country, a parasite on her trade."

"Mm . ." bellowed the old man, keeping one eye on his guest, and watching his daughter with the other.—"So, I understand,—your present intention is—to establish such a huge factory, that nothing will be left for all the others—except a coffin and its cover?"

"O, no!" exclaimed Smólin, waving off the old man's words with an easy gesture . . "Why injure the others? What right have I to do that? My aim is, to raise the importance and price of Russian leather abroad, and so, armed with knowledge as to the manufacture, I shall erect a model

factory, and put model wares on the market . . . The commercial honor of the country . . ."

"Does it require much capital, did you say?" asked Mayákin meditatively.

"About three hundred thousand . . ."

"Father won't give that much as my dowry," thought Liubóff.

"My factory will turn out leather goods also, in the shape of trunks, shoes, harnesses, straps, and so forth."

"What per cent. do you dream of making?" asked the old man.

"I am not dreaming, I am reckoning with all the accuracy possible under conditions in Russia,"—said Smólin impressively.—"A manufacturer should be severely sober, in his quality of a mechanician who is creating a machine. The wear and tear on every screw, no matter how small, must be included in the calculation, if you wish to treat a serious matter seriously. I can give you to read two little records which I have drawn up, founded upon my own personal study of cattle-breeding and the consumption of meat in Russia."

"You don't say so!" laughed Mayákin.—"You fetch me your records . . I'm curious to see them! Evidently, you didn't spend your time in vain in that same Western Europe. But now, let's have something to eat, after the Russian custom . ."

"How goes life with you Liubóff Yakóvlevna?" asked Smólin, as he armed himself with knife and fork.

"She finds life with me very tiresome," Mayákin replied for his daughter.—"She's my housekeeper,—the whole management lies on her,—so she never has any time to amuse herself . ."

"And no place, either, you ought to add," said Liubóff.

"I am not fond of merchants' balls and evening parties . ."

"But the theatre?" inquired Smólin.

"I rarely go there—I have no one to go with."

"The theatre!" exclaimed the old man.—"Tell me, pray, why it has become so much the fashion to represent the merchant as a wild fool? It's very amusing, but it's incomprehensible, because it isn't true! How am I a fool if in the City Council I'm the master, and in trade I'm the master,—and that's my little theatre? . . You look at a merchant on the stage, and you see—that he's not consistent with life! Of course, if you are giving a historical play, for example, 'Life for the Tzar,' with singing and dancing,[1] or 'Hamlet,' or 'The Sorceress,' or 'Vasilísa'—truth to nature is not required,—the matter is past, and does not concern us . . No matter whether it is true or not, so long as it's good . . But if you're representing the present day,—then don't lie! And show the man as he is!"

Smólin listened to the old man's speech with a polite smile on his lips, and kept casting at Liubóff glances which seemed to invite her to reply to her father.

In some confusion, she said:

"And yet, papa, the majority of the merchant class are uneducated and rough . ."

"Yes," said Smólin regretfully, with an affirmative nod of the head,—"that is the melancholy truth."

"There, for example, is Fomá," went on the young girl.

"O?" exclaimed Mayákin.—"Well, you young folks—you must have books in your hands . ."

"And you never participate in any social affairs?"

[1] Glínka's famous and favorite opera, founded on an incident connected with the election to the throne of Tzar Mikháil Feódorovitch, the first Románoff sovereign, in the year 1612.—*Translator.*

Smólin asked Liubóff. "You have a great deal of society here . ."

"Yes," said Liubóff with a sigh, "but I live rather apart from everything . ."

"Housekeeping!" put in her father.—"We have so many nonsensical things about—everything has to be kept account of, kept clean and in order . ."

He nodded his head with self-satisfaction at the table, set out with glittering crystal and silver, and at the sideboard, whose shelves were fairly breaking under the load of articles, and reminded the beholder of a display in a shop window. Smólin scrutinized all these things, and an ironical smile flitted across his lips. Then he glanced at Liubóff's face; in his glance she detected an element that was friendly, sympathetic to her. A faint blush colored her cheeks, and, with inward joy she said to herself:

"Thank God!"

The light of the massive bronze lamp seemed to gleam more brilliantly on the facets of the crystal dishes, and the room grew brighter.

"Your splendid old town pleases me!" said Smólin, looking at the young girl with a caressing smile,—"it is so beautiful, so dashing . . it has something alert about it, which incites one to work . . its very picturesqueness seems stimulating . . In it one wishes to live an expansive life . . one wants to work much and seriously . . And then, it is an intelligent town . . Just see what a practical newspaper is published here . . By the way, we wish to purchase it . ."

"Whom do you mean by 'we'?" asked Mayákin.

"Why, I . . Urvantzóff Shtchúkin . ."

"That's laudable!" said the old man, smiting the table with his fist.—"That' very practical! It's time to gag it

—it ought to have been done long ago! In particular, there's an Ezhóff there . . he's a regular coarse-toothed saw . . . You just put the thumb-screws on him! Give them a good turn!"

Again Smólin cast at Liubóff a smiling glance, and again her heart quivered with joy. With a vivid flush on her cheeks she said to her father, inwardly addressing her remarks to her bridegroom:

"So far as I understand Afrián Dmítrievitch, he is not going to buy the paper with the least intention of closing its mouth, as you say."

"Then what can he do with it?"—inquired the old man, shrugging his shoulders.—"There's nothing to it but empty bragging and sedition . . . Of course, if practical people, the merchants themselves, take to writing for it . ."

"The publication of a newspaper," said Smólin didactically, interrupting the old man's speech, "if it be regarded only from the commercial point of view, may be a very profitable undertaking. But, in addition to this, a newspaper has another, a more important object—it lies in defending the rights of individuality, and the interests of industry and trade."

"That's exactly what I say,—if the merchants themselves will manage it, the newspaper, why then, . . it will be useful . . ."

"Allow me, papa," said Liubóff.

She had begun to feel the need of expressing herself before Smólin; she wished to convince him that she understood the significance of his words, that she was not a common merchant's daughter, devoted to dress and dancing. Smólin pleased her. For the first time she beheld a merchant, who had lived long abroad, who reasoned so suggestively, who bore himself in so gentlemanly a way, who was

so well dressed, and who conversed with her father—the wisest man in town—in the patronizing tone of a grown man towards a minor.

"After the wedding I will persuade him to take me abroad," she suddenly said to herself, and, disconcerted at this thought, she forgot what she had wished to say to her father. Blushing deeply, she remained silent for a few seconds, completely overcome with terror lest Smólin should interpret this silence in a manner unflattering to her.

"While you have been talking, you have quite forgotten to offer your guest any wine," she contrived to say after several disagreeable seconds of silence.

"That's your affair; you are the mistress of the house," retorted her father.

"O, pray do not trouble yourself!" exclaimed Smólin with animation.—"I hardly drink at all."

"Really?" queried Mayákin.

"I don't, I assure you! Sometimes I take a glass or two, in case of fatigue or illness . . But wine for pleasure—is incomprehensible to me. There are other pleasures more worthy of a cultivated man."

"Women, you mean?" inquired the old man, with a wink.

Smólin's cheeks and neck became scarlet with the color which flew to his face. He glanced at Liubóff with apologetic eyes, and said drily to her father:

"There is the theatre, there are books, and music . ."

Liubóff fairly blossomed out at his words.

But the old man looked askance at the worthy young man, laughed rather sharply, and suddenly burst forth:

"Ekh, life moves on! In former days, a puppy devoured a crust eagerly, now-a-days a lap-dog finds the cream too thin . . Excuse me, my amiable sirs, for the unpleasant

remark . . it is very much to the point! It's not aimed at you, but is a general remark."

Liubóff turned pale, and cast an apprehensive glance at Smólin. He was sitting quietly, looking at an ancient salt-cellar in the form of a porringer, decorated with enamel, twisting his mustache, and, apparently had not heard the old man's words. But his eyes clouded over, and his lips were pressed together very firmly, so that his shaven chin projected straight forward.

"So, I understand, Mr. Future Leading Merchant," resumed Mayákin, as though nothing had happened,—"three hundred thousand rubles,—and your business will begin to thrive like a house afire?"

"And within a year and a half I shall put on the market my first parcel of goods, which will go off like hot cakes," said Smólin, simply, and with immovable confidence, and looked the old man straight in the eye, with a firm, cold stare.

"So it's to be: the mercantile house of Smólin and Mayákin and—no one else? . . . Yes, sir . . Only, it's rather late in life for me to start a new business, isn't it, hey? I must assume that a little grave has been made for me long ago . . what do you think about it?"

In lieu of a reply, Smólin laughed for several seconds, with a rich, but cold and indifferent laugh, and then said:

"Eh, have done . ."

The old man shuddered at his laughter, and recoiled, timorously, with an almost imperceptible movement of his body. All three remained silent for a moment after Smólin's words.

"Well, ye-es . . ." said Mayákin, without raising his head, which was bent very low . . "One must think of that,—I must think of that . . ." Then, raising his

head, he intently surveyed his daughter and her suitor, and, rising from his chair, he said, loudly and sullenly:—"I'm going away from you for a little minute into my little study . . You won't feel bored without me, I fancy!"

And off he went, with bowed back and drooping head, dragging his feet heavily along.

The young people, on being left alone, exchanged a few empty phrases, and, in all probability, conscious that this only removed them further apart, they relapsed into an oppressive, awkward silence of anticipation. Liubóff, taking an orange, began to peel it with exaggerated care, while Smólin inspected his mustache, with lowered eyes, then carefully stroked it with his left hand, toyed with a knife, and suddenly asked the young girl, in a lowered tone:

"A . . . pardon me for my indiscretion! You really must find it very difficult to live with your papa . . . he's a man of the old school, and—excuse me—decidedly harsh!"

Liubóff quivered, and cast a grateful glance at the red-haired man, as she said to him:

"It is not easy, but I have got used to it . . He has his good qualities . . ."

"O, undoubtedly! But for you, young, beautiful, educated, for you with your views . . you see, I have heard more or less about you . . ."

He smiled so caressingly and sympathetically, and his voice was so soft . . A spirit of warmth and cheer was wafted through the room. And in the heart of the young girl there flamed up more and more brightly the timid hope of happiness, of release from the close captivity of isolation.

XII

A DENSE, grayish fog hung over the river, and a steamer, shrieking dully, was slowly sailing up it against the current. The damp, cold clouds, of a deadly monotony of hue, enveloped the steamer on all sides, and deadened all sounds, dissolving them all in their turbid humidity. The brazen roar of signals droned out in a stifled, mournful way, and was strangely brief, as it burst forth from the whistle: the sound seemingly unable to find a place for itself in the air, impregnated with dense humidity, fell downward, wet and choked. And the noise of the steamer's wheels sounded as fantastically-dull as though it did not proceed from close at hand, but from somewhere deep down below, on the dark bed of the river. From the steamer, neither the water nor the hills nor the sky were visible: a leaden-gray obscurity enveloped it on all sides; devoid of shading, painfully monotonous, it lay motionless, pressed upon the steamer with immeasurable weight, impeded its movements, and seemed to be making ready to suck it down into its bosom, as it was sucking the sounds. Despite the dull blows of the paddle-blades upon the water, and the regular vibration of the vessel's body, it seemed as though the steamer were painfully struggling on one spot, panting with agony, hissing like an expiring monster in a fairy-tale, howling in the death-agony, howling with pain and the fear of death.

The lights of the steamer were lifeless. Around the lantern on the mast a circular, motionless spot had formed;

it hung in the fog above the vessel, devoid of radiance, and illuminating nothing, except the gray mist. The red starboard light resembled a huge eye, crushed out by someone's cruel fist, blinded, suffused with blood. Pale specks of light fell upon the fog from the windows of the steamer, and merely accentuated its cold triumph, devoid of joy, over the vessel crushed by the motionless mass of choking dampness.

The smoke from the funnel fell downwards, and, in company with fragments of the fog, penetrated into all the cracks of the deck, where the third-class passengers had silently wrapped themselves in their rags, and were huddling together in little knots, like sheep. From the machinery proceeded heavy, painful sighs, quivering bell-signals, the dull sounds of orders and the fragmentary words of the engineer:

"Yes sir—slow! . . Yes sir . . half-speed!"

On the stern, in a corner piled high with casks of salted fish, was assembled a group of people who were illuminated by an electric light. These persons were staid, warmly and neatly clad peasants; one of them was reclining on a bench, back upward, another was sitting at his feet, still another was standing, with his back propped against a cask, and two were seated flat on the deck. The countenances of all, thoughtful and attentive, were turned towards a round-shouldered man in a rusty cassock, and a tattered fur cap. This man was sitting, with bowed back, upon a box, and gazing at his feet, was talking in a quiet, confident voice:

"There will come an end to the longsuffering of the Lord, and His wrath will break forth upon men . . We are all worms in His sight, and when His wrath is loosed upon us, with what wailing shall we appeal to His mercy?"

Under the haunting impulse of his distress, Fomá had quitted his cabin and descended to the deck, and, for a long time, had been standing in the shadow of some freight covered with a tarpaulin, and listening to the gentle, hortatory voice of the exhorter. As he strode up and down the deck, he had come upon this group, and had paused in its vicinity, attracted by the figure of the pilgrim. There was something familiar to him in that huge, strong body, with the dark, austere visage, and large, calm eyes. The curling, iron-gray hair, which escaped from beneath the skull-cap, the abundant, unkempt beard, falling apart in thick tufts, the long, hooked nose, the sharp-pointed ears, the thick lips—all these Fomá had beheld before, at some time or other, but he could not recall when and where.

"We-ll, we are burdened with many arrears in the sight of the Lord!" said one of the peasants, sighing heavily.

"We must pray," whispered the peasant who was lying on the bench, in a barely audible voice.

"Can sinful impiety be scraped clean from the soul by prayerful words?" exclaimed some one on one side, loudly, almost with despair in his voice.

None of the persons who formed the group about the pilgrim turned towards this voice, but the heads of all sank yet lower, and for a long time these men sat motionless and silent.

The pilgrim surveyed all his hearers with a serious and meditative glance of his blue eyes, and began again, softly:

"Ephraim the Syrian hath said: 'Make thy soul the central point of thy thought, and strengthen thyself with thy will unto freedom from sin . . .'"

And again he bowed his head, slowly slipping the beads of his rosary through his fingers.

"That means, we must think?" said one of the peasants.

"But what time has a man to think when he lives in the world?"

"All around us is turmoil . ."

"We must flee to the desert," said the recumbent peasant.

"Not everyone can do that . ."

The peasants said their say, and again fell silent. A whistle sounded, a little bell rang at the engine. A loud shout rang out from somewhere or other:

"Hi, there! To the measuring poles . . ."

"O Lord, O Queen of Heaven!" came a heavy sigh.

But a dull, half-choked voice shouted:

"Ni-i-ine . . ni-i-ine . ."[1]

Tufts of mist broke away and fell on the deck, and rolled across it like cold, gray smoke.

"Here, good people, hearken to the words of King David . . . " said the pilgrim, and swaying his head to and fro, he began to recite distinctly: 'Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness, because of mine enemies; make thy way plain before my face! For there is no faithfulness in his mouth, their inward parts are very wickedness, their throat is an open sepulchre, they flatter with their tongue . . Destroy thou them, O God, let them perish through their imaginations . .'"

"E-eight . . Se-even . . ."

The steamer hissed angrily, and slowed down. The roaring hiss of the steam drowned the pilgrim's words, and Fomá could only see the movement of his lips.

"Get out!" rang out a loud and angry cry . . "It's my place!"

"You-urs?"

[1] The numbers here, and further on, refer to soundings, which, on the Volga steamers, are made with long poles, by men stationed on the bow.—*Translator.*

"Here's yours for you!"

"I'll hit you a lick over the snout . . then you'll find your own place . . Hey, what a fine gentleman!"

"Go along with you!"

An uproar arose. The peasants who were listening to the pilgrim turned their heads towards the quarter where the row was in progress, and the pilgrim heaved a sigh and stopped short. A loud and lively dispute flamed up near the engine, as though dry branches, cast upon a bonfire, had caught the flame.

"I'll give it to you, you devils. Scat, both of you!"

"Take them to the captain."

"Ha-ha-ha! Here's a fine settlement!"

"That was a healthy whack he gave him in the neck!"

"They're sailors . . they're experts at that . . ."

"Ei-eight . . . Ni-i-ine . . ." shouted the man with the sounding-pole.

"Yes, sir—increased speed!" rang out the engineer's loud cry.

Swaying unsteadily on his feet with the motion of the steamer, Fomá stood queezed up against the tarpaulin, lending an attentive ear to all the sounds around him, which where merged, for him, into one general, familiar picture.

Through fog and uncertainty, surrounded on all sides by obscurity impenetrable to the eye, slowly and laboriously the life of men moves onward to some goal. But people grieve over their sins, sigh heavily, and then and there set to quarrelling over a warm place, and after thrashing each other for its possession, they in turn endure blows from those who desire to obtain order in life. Timidly they seek a free path for their ends.

"Ni-ine . . . Ei-eight . . ."

Softly the wailing cry is wafted over the ship, and the

prayer of the pilgrim fades away amid the din of life. And there is no relief from grief, there is no joy, for him who begins to meditate upon his fate.

Fomá wished to have a talk with the pilgrim, in whose quiet words resounded genuine fear of the Lord, and all sorts of fear for men before His face. The gentle, admonitory voice of the pilgrim possessed a peculiar power, which made Fomá listen to its deep chest tones.

"I'd like to ask how he lives . . ." thought Fomá, intently scrutinizing the huge, bowed form.—"And where have I seen him? Or does he resemble someone whom I know?"

Suddenly, for some reason, it occurred to Fomá with peculiar vividness, that this gentle exhorter was no other than the son of old Ananíi Shtchúroff. Struck by this conjecture, he stepped up to the pilgrim, and sitting down beside him, he inquired easily:

"Are you from the Irgíz, father?"

The man raised his head, slowly and with difficulty turned his face to Fomá, inspected him, and said gently, in a composed voice:

"I have been on the Irgíz."

"O you belong there yourself?"

"No."

"And where do you hail from now?"

"From the shrine of Saint Stephen . ."

The conversation dropped,—Fomá lacked the boldness to ask the pilgrim whether he were not Shtchúroff?

"We shall be behind time with this fog," said someone.

"How can we help being!"

All fell silent, and gazed at Fomá. Young, handsome, neatly and expensively clad, he had aroused the curiosity of those about him by his sudden appearance among them,

was conscious of this curiosity, understood that they were all waiting for him to speak, were desirous of finding out why he had joined them, and—all this disconcerted and enraged him.

"It seems to me, father, that I have seen you before," he said, at last.

The pilgrim replied, without looking at him:

"Perhaps . . ."

"I must have a talk with you," declared Fomá faint-heartedly, in a low tone.

"What is it? Speak . ."

"Come with me . ."

"Whither?"

"To my cabin."

The pilgrim glanced at Fomá's face, and, after a pause, consented:

"Come on."

As he walked away, Fomá felt the eyes of the peasants on his back, and now it pleased him to know that they took an interest in him.

In his cabin, he inquired affably:

"Perhaps you would like to eat something? Say so—I will order it . ."

"Christ save you . . . What do you want?"

This man, in his dirty, tattered cassock, rusty with age and covered with patches,—cast a squeamish glance of scrutiny about the cabin, and when he seated himself on the plush-covered divan, he turned up the skirt of his cassock, as though afraid that it would get soiled by the plush.

"What shall I call you, father?" asked Fomá, taking note of the fastidious expression on the man's face.

"Mirón."

"And not Mikháil?"

"Why Mikháil?" inquired the pilgrim.

"Why . . in our town there was . . the son of a certain merchant, Shtchúroff . . . who also went off to the Irgíz . . and his name was Mikháil . ."

As Fomá spoke, he kept his eyes intently fixed on father Mirón; but the latter was as calm as a deaf-mute.

"I never met such a man . . I don't remember having met him . ." he said thoughtfully . . . "Was it about him that you wished to speak to me?"

"Ye-es . . ."

"I never have met Mikháil Shtchúroff . . Now excuse me, for Christ's sake!" and, rising from the divan, the pilgrim bowed to Fomá and went towards the door.

"Wait . . . sit down . . let us talk!" exclaimed Fomá, dashing at him uneasily. The latter cast a searching glance at him, and dropped down on the divan.

From somewhere in the distance there was borne to their ears a dull sound, resembling a deep groan, and it was followed by the frightened, prolonged roar of the steam-whistle above the heads of Fomá and his guest. From the distance came a still clearer reply to it, and again it roared not far from them in broken, terrifying shrieks. Fomá opened the window; through the fog, not far from their steamer, something was moving with a ponderous noise, spots of transparent lights floated past, the fog was violently agitated, and again sank back into dead immobility . .

"What a terror!" exclaimed Fomá, closing the window.

"What is there to be afraid of?" asked the pilgrim.

"Why—you see! It's neither day nor night . . . neither dark nor light! Nothing is visible . . we are sailing to some indefinite point or other, we are astray on the river . . ."

"Have within you inward fire, light in your soul, and you will see everything," said the pilgrim didactically and austerely.

Fomá was displeased with these cold words, and cast a sidelong glance at the pilgrim. The latter was sitting, with bowed head, as immovable as though he were absorbed in prayer and meditation. The beads of his rosary rustled softly through his fingers.

His attitude begot in Fomá's breast a sort of free and easy audacity, and he remarked:

"Say, father Mirón, it's fine to live so—according to your own free will . . . without affairs, without relatives . . roving about as a pilgrim, as you do."

Father Mirón raised his head, and began to laugh softly, with a certain caressing, child-like laughter. His whole countenance, of a cinnamon-brown hue from wind and sunburn, was illuminated by the light of inward joy. He was another man—not the man of prayer and the preacher of an upright life and the fear of God, but a kindly, simple peasant, whose soft laughter called forth from Fomá a good-natured smile. But when he had done laughing, and had taken a look at Fomá, Mirón merely uttered a profound sigh, and said briefly:

"As if it could be bad!"

"That means, that you are satisfied with your life?"

"I do not burden the ear of the Lord with my reproaches . . it's all right, I manage to live! The lowly life is the truly godly one . . the only one that is free from worldly ways . . ."

"Well, here am I now," Fomá began, but broke off, and became silent. That enviably joyous laugh still rang in his ears.

"Why did you retire from the world?" he asked, after a pause.

"I was a stranger to my brethren," replied Mirón calmly, and surveying the cabin with an attentive, reflective gaze, he said, with contemptuous compassion:

"Eh, how they have built! They adorn themselves, adorn themselves outwardly, but within they are all rubbish . ."

"Ye-es . . ." drawled Fomá, staring out of the window.—"So you like to wander about? Is it a free life?"

"Ekh, my brother!" exclaimed the pilgrim softly, moving nearer to Fomá, and gazing into his face both caressingly and sadly:—"I divine that you are troubled in soul—are you not?"

Fomá silently nodded his head, and gazed expectantly at his interlocutor.

Mirón's face beamed with quiet joy, he touched Fomá's knee with his hand, and began, in a cordial tone:

"Burn out of yourself what is worldly, for there is no sweetness in it. I speak the righteous word—depart from evil. Do you remember how it is said: 'Blessed is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners?' Seclude yourself, refresh your soul with solitude, and fill yourself with the thought of the Lord . . For only by the thought of Him can a man save himself from defilement."

"That's not what I want!" said Fomá. "There's no need for me to work out my salvation as an ascetic—have I sinned greatly? With other people, it's different . . . What I'd like to comprehend is . . ."

"And you will comprehend it, if you separate yourself from the world . . Go you forth upon the free road, upon the fields, upon the steppes, upon the plains, upon the mountains . . . go forth, and gaze upon the world with freedom, from afar . . ."

"There!" cried Fomá. "That's exactly what I think . . It is better seen from one side."

But Mirón, paying no heed to his words, went on talking as softly as though his spèech concerned some great secret, known only to him, the pilgrim:

"The forests, dreaming in primeval denseness, will begin to rustle all about thee, with sweet voices, touching the wisdom of the Lord; God's little birds will sing to thee of His holy glory, and the plume-grass of the steppes will burn incense to the All-Holy Virgin Birth-Giver of God."

The voice of the pilgrim now rose and quivered with fulness of feeling, now sank to a mysterious whisper. He seemed to have grown younger: his eyes shone so confidently and clearly, and his whole countenance beamed with the happy smile of a man who has found a vent for his sentiment of happiness, and exults as he pours it forth.

"In every tiny blade of grass beats the heart of the Lord; every insect, of the earth and of the air, breathes forth His Holy Spirit: everywhere God—the Lord Jesus Christ liveth! What beauty there is on the earth, in the meadows, in the forests! Have you been on the Kerzhenétz? The tranquillity there is beyond compare, the trees, the grass—are like paradise . . ."

Fomá listened, and his imagination, captivated by the quiet, entrancing narrative, depicted to him those broad meadows and dense forests, full of beauty and silence, so pacifying to the soul . . .

"You look up at the sky, as you lie under a bush, and it keeps descending, descending to you, as though it wanted to embrace you . . Your soul is warm and quietly-joyful, you desire nothing, you envy no one . . . And so it seems as though, on all the earth, there were only you and God . . ."

The pilgrim continued to talk, but his voice and sing-song speech reminded Fomá of his old Aunt Anfísa's wonderful fairy-tales. He felt as though, after a long journey on a hot day, he were drinking the pure, cold water of a forest brook,—water impregnated with the fragrance of the grass and flowers which it had bathed . . . Ever more widely opened out before him brilliant pictures: here was the path which led into the primeval forest; through the branches of the trees slender rays of sunlight made their way, quivering in the air, and under the feet of the wayfarer . . . There is a savory odor of mushrooms and damp, decaying foliage; the honeyed aroma of flowers, the thick odor of the pine-trees perfume the air, and penetrate the breast in a warm, rich stream . . . All around is silence: only the birds are singing, and this silence is so marvellous, that it seems as though the birds were singing in your own breast . . . You stroll on, without haste, and your life goes on like a dream.

But here, everything is enveloped in gray, dead fog, and we struggle in it, grieving for freedom and light. Now, with barely audible voices, they have started something on the lower deck which is not exactly a song, nor yet exactly a prayer. Again someone shouts, curses. And still the way must be sought:

"Seven and a ha-alf . . . Se-ven!"

"And you have no care about anything," said the pilgrim, and his voice purled like a brook,—"anybody will give you a morsel of bread; and what else does a free man like you require? In the world, cares lay themselves, like chains, upon the soul."

"You talk well!" said Fomá with a sigh.

"My dear brother!" exclaimed the pilgrim softly, moving still closer to him.—"If your soul has waked up, if it

longs for freedom, do not lull it to sleep by force, hearken to its voice . . . In the world, in its allurements, there is no beauty, no holiness—wherefore, why submit yourself to its law? In John Chrysostom it is said: 'Man is the true shekinah!' But shekinah is a Hebrew word, and it signifies, the holy of holies. Consequently . . ."

A prolonged shriek of the whistle drowned his voice. He listened, rose quickly from the divan, and said:

"They are whistling for the wharf.—I must go! Well, good-bye, brother! The Lord grant thee firmness and strength to do according to the desire of thy soul! Farewell, my dear man!"

He bowed low to Fomá. There was something soft and caressing, like a woman, in his parting words and bow. And Fomá, also, bowed low to him, bowed, and became motionless, as he stood with drooping head, and his hand resting on the table.

"If you are in town, come to see me," he invited the pilgrim, who was hastily turning the handle of the cabin door.

"I will! I'll come! Farewell! Christ save you!"

When the steamer butted her side against the wharf Fomá went out on the gallery, and stood gazing down into the fog. People were passing down the gangways from the steamer, but amid these dark figures, enveloped in thick mist, he did not recognize the pilgrim. All who left the boat were equally indistinct, and all speedily vanished from sight, as though they had melted into the gray dampness. Neither the shore nor anything else stable was visible, the landing rocked with the commotion produced by the steamer, and on it rocked the yellow speck of a lantern; the noise of footsteps and the turmoil of the people was deadened.

The steamer pushed off, and slowly moved forward into the clouds. The pilgrim, the wharf, the murmur of people's voices, all vanished suddenly, like a dream, and once more nothing remained save the dense obscurity and the steamer rolling heavily through it. Fomá stared ahead into the dead sea of fog, and thought of the blue, cloudless, smiling sky—where was it?

On the following day, about noon, he was seated in Ezhóff's tiny room, and listening to the news of the town from the mouth of his chum. Ezhóff had climbed upon the table, which was loaded down with newspapers, and dangling his feet, was narrating:

"The election campaign has begun, the merchant class are pushing your god-father to the head, the old devil! Like the devil, he is immortal—although he must be over one hundred and fifty years old already. He is going to marry his daughter to Smólin . . you remember him, the red-headed one! People say that he is a very gentlemanly sort of fellow . . . but now-a-days, even clever rascals are called gentlemanly fellows . . . because there are no men! Now little Afrikán is putting on the airs of an enlightened person, he has already succeeded in making his way into cultivated society, he contributed something to some undertaking or other, and immediately became prominent. Judging from his phiz, he's a first-class sharper, but he will play his part, for he possesses a sense of proportion. We-ell, now, dear little brother Afrikán is a liberal . . But a liberal merchant is a mixture of a wolf and a pig with a toad and a snake . ."

"Deuce take the whole lot of them!" said Fomá, with an indifferent wave of the hand.—"What have I to do with them? How about yourself—do you still drink?"

"Yes! Why shouldn't I?"

The half-clad and dishevelled Ezhóff resembled a bird stripped of its feathers, which has just been engaged in a fight, and has not succeeded in recovering from the excitement of battle.

"I drink because I feel the need, from time to time, of quenching the flame of my humiliated heart . . But you, you dry stump, are you gradually decaying?"

"I must go to the old man," said Fomá, wrinkling up his face.

"Risk it!"

"I don't want to . . . He'll begin to lecture me . . ."

"Then don't go!"

"But I must."

"Then go!"

"Why are you always so flippant?" asked Fomá with displeasure. "It seems as though he actually enjoyed . . ."

"By God, I always do enjoy things!" exclaimed Ezhóff, springing from the table.—"What a fine dressing-down I gave a certain gentleman in the paper yes-terday! And then, I have heard a very witty anecdote: A party was sitting on the seashore, philosophizing at length upon life. And a Jew said to them: 'Jantlemens! why-y sho many different wordsh? I'll shay everydings to you at onsh: our lifes is not vorth von kopék, like this stormy sea!'"

"Eh, that's just like you!" said Fomá. "Good-bye . . I'm going."

"Go ahead! I'm in a top-lofty mood today, and I can't groan with you . . all the more so as you don't groan, but grunt . ."

Fomá departed, leaving Ezhóff singing, at the top of his lungs:

"Rattle away on the dru-u-um, and have no fear . ."

"The drum—you're a drum yourself," thought Fomá with irritation, as he hastily emerged into the street.

At Mayákin's house he was met by Liúba. She suddenly appeared before him agitated and animated for some reason, saying quickly:

"Is it you? Good heavens! Ho-ow pale you are! . . How thin you have grown . . You lead a nice life, that's evident!"

Then her face contracted with alarm, and she cried, almost in a whisper:

"Akh, Fomá! You don't know—for you see—there! Do you hear? Someone is ringing the bell! Perhaps it is he!"

And the young girl rushed from the room, leaving behind her in the air the rustle of her silken gown, and the astounded Fomá, who had not managed even to ask her where her father was. Yákoff Tarásovitch was at home. Attired in his best, in a long frock-coat, with his medals on his breast, he stood in the doorway with hands outspread, holding fast to the jambs. His little green eyes searched Fomá, and feeling their gaze upon him, the latter raised his head, and encountered them.

"Good morning, my fine sir!" began the old man, shaking his head reproachfully.—"Whence has it pleased you to arrive? Who has sucked all that fat off you? Or does a pig seek a puddle and Fomá the worst place he can find?"[1]

"Have you no other words for me?" asked Fomá sullenly, staring point-blank at the old man.

[1] Expressed in rhyme, and more succinctly in the Russian: "Svínya íshtchet gdye lúzha, i Fomá gdye khúzhe"; the pigs seek where there is a puddle, and Fomá where it is worst.—*Translator.*

And all at once he perceived that his god-father was trembling all over, his legs were shaking, his eyes were winking incessantly, and his hands were clutching the door-jambs with strained intensity. Fomá moved towards him, supposing that the old man was feeling ill, but Yákoff Tarásovïtch said, in a dull, angry voice:

"Stand aside . . go away . . ."

And his face assumed its wonted expression.

Fomá stepped back, and found himself by the side of a short, plump man, who, bowing to Yákoff Tarásovitch, said in a hoarse voice:

"How do you do, papa?"

"Good mo-orning, Tarás Yakóvlevitch, good morning," said the old man, without removing his hands from the door-jambs, and saluted with a preoccupied smile.

Fomá, in confusion, retreated to one side, seated himself in an arm-chair, and petrified with curiosity, began to watch, with staring eyes, the meeting between father and son.

The father, standing in the doorway, swayed his lean body to and fro, clinging to the door-posts with his hands, and, with head bent on one side, and eyes screwed up, gazed in silence at his son. The son stood three paces away, with his head, already sprinkled with gray, held high, with lowering brows, and gazing at his father with his large, dark eyes. His small, black pointed beard and small mustache quivered on his thin face, with its cartilaginous nose, inherited from his father. And his hat, also, trembled in his hand. Over his shoulder Fomá beheld Liúba's pale, frightened and joyous face—she was regarding her father with beseeching eyes, and it seemed as though she were on the very verge of shrieking aloud. For a few seconds they all remained silent and motionless, overwhelmed with the immensity of their feelings. The silence was broken by the

quiet, strangely dull and trembling voice of Yákoff Mayákin:

"You have aged, Tarás . . ."

The son laughed silently in his father's face, and with one swift glance surveyed him from head to foot.

The father, wrenching his hands from the door-posts, advanced towards his son—and suddenly stopped short, with a frown. Then Tarás Mayákin, with one huge stride, stepped in front of his father, and offered him his hand.

"Come . . let us kiss each other," suggested the old man softly.

The two old men threw their arms convulsively round each other, exchanged hearty kisses, and then stood off from each other. The wrinkles of the older man quivered, the lean face of the younger was immovable, almost harsh. The kisses had effected no change in the external aspect of this scene, only Liubóff gave a sob of joy, and Fomá fidgetted awkwardly in his chair, feeling as though his breath were being stopped.

"Ekh . . . children . . . you are wounds to the heart . . . and not its joy . . .—" complained Yákoff Tarásovitch, in a ringing voice, and he must have put a great deal into the remark, for immediately afterwards he beamed, became brisk, and began to talk with a dash, addressing himself to his daughter:

"Well, have you turned weak with joy? Come on, prepare something for us—tea, and so forth . . . We'll entertain the prodigal son! You've probably forgotten, my dear little old man, what sort of a father you have?"

Tarás Mayákin surveyed his parent with a meditative look in his large eyes, and smiled; he was taciturn, clad in black, which made the gray hair on his head and in his beard stand out the more conspicuously.

"Come, sit down! Tell me—how you have lived; what have you done?—What are you staring at? Ah! This is my god-son, Ignát Gordyéeff's son, Fomá . . . You remember Ignát?"

"I remember everything," said Tarás.

"Oh? That's good . . . if you're not bragging . . Well, are you married?"

"I'm a widower."

"Have you children?"

"They are dead . . I had two . . ."

"It's a pi-ity . . I'd have liked some grand-children . ."

"May I smoke?" Tarás asked his father.

"Go ahead! . . . You don't say that you smoke cigars?"

"Don't you like them?"

"I? Go on, I don't mind . . . I only meant it was rather like the gentry . . to smoke cigars . . ."

"And why should I consider myself inferior to the gentry?" said Tarás, laughing.

"Do I consider myself inferior then?!" exclaimed the old man.—"I merely said—that it seemed ridiculous to me . . Such a staid old fellow . . . beard in foreign fashion, cigar in mouth . . . Who is he? My little son . . he-he-he!"—The old man slapped Tarás on the shoulder, and jumped away from him, as though alarmed lest he were rejoicing too soon, lest that might not be the proper way to treat a man whose hair was half gray. And he gazed inquisitively and suspiciously at his son's large eyes, encircled by yellowish swellings.

Tarás smiled into his father's face with a courteous, cordial smile, and said to him thoughtfully:

"That's the way I remember you . . jolly and alert

. . . You seem not to have changed in the least during all these years."

The old man drew himself up proudly, and dealing himself a blow on the chest with his fist, said:

"I—never change! . . . Because, life has no power over a man who knows his own value! Isn't that so?"

"Oho! How proud you are!"

"I must take after my son!" remarked the old man, with a sly grimace.—"My good sir, I have a son who has maintained silence for seventeen years out of pride . ."

"That was because his father would not listen to him," Tarás reminded him.

"That's all right now! There's been enough of that . . . God only knows which is to blame toward the other . . . He is just, He will tell you—wait! But I shall hold my peace . . . This is no time for you and me to discuss that matter now . . . Now, see here, tell me what you have been doing all these years. How did you hit upon that soda factory? Have you become a man of mark?"

"It's a long story!" said Tarás with a sigh, and emitting from his mouth a huge puff of smoke, he began deliberately: —"When I acquired the possibility of living at liberty, I entered the office of the superintendent at the Rémezoffs' gold mines . . ."

"I know . . immensely wealthy people! Three brothers—I know them all! One, is a monster, the second is a fool, and the third is a miser . . Go on!"

"I served two years under him—and then I married his daughter . ." narrated Mayákin in a hoarse voice.

"The superintendent's? That wasn't a stupid thing to do . . ."

Tarás reflected, and remained silent. The old man cast a glance at his sad face, and understood his son.

"Of course, you lived happily with your wife," said he.—"Well, what next? To the dead—paradise, and let the living play on . . You're not so very old . . Have you been a widower long?"

"Two years."

"So . . And how did you get interested in soda?"

"The factory belongs to my father-in-law . ."

"Aha! How much do you get?"

"About five thousand . ."

"Mm . . . that's not a stale morsel! We-ell, ye-es! Here's a hard-labor convict for you!"

Tarás cast a firm glance at his father, and drily inquired:

"By the way—where did you get the idea that I had been a convict?"

The old man looked at his son with amazement, which was speedily converted into joy:

"Ah . . how was it then? You were not? O, you don't say so! Then—how was it? Don't feel offended! How could I tell? They said you had been in Siberia! Well, and the galleys are there!"

"For the sake of making an end of this, once for all," said Tarás seriously and impressively, slapping his knee with his hand,—"I will tell you now exactly the state of the case. I was banished to Siberia, simply to reside there, for six years, and I spent the whole period of my exile in the mining region of the Lena . . I passed about nine months in prison in Moscow . . and that's all there is to it!"

"You don't sa-ay so! But . . . what does it mean?" . . muttered Yákoff Tarásovitch, discomfited and delighted.

"And then that absurd report was put in circulation . . ."

"Absurd indeed," grieved the old man.

"And it did me a pretty bad turn on one occasion . . ."

"What? Really?"

"Yes . . . I was about to start in business, and my credit was ruined, thanks to . . ."

"Phew!" and Yákoff Mayákin spat angrily to one side. —"Akh, the devil! You don't mean to say!"

All this time, Fomá sat in his corner listening to the conversation of the Mayákins, persistently scrutinizing the newcomer, and blinking with amazement. Calling to mind Liubóff's relations to her brother, and being influenced, to a certain degree, by her stories about Tarás, he had expected to detect in his countenance something unusual, something unlike the ordinary run of people. He had thought that Tarás would speak peculiarly, somehow, and would be dressed after a fashion of his own, and, in general —that he would be different from other people. But before him sat a sedate, full-bodied man, severely clad, with severe eyes, very like his father in face, and distinguished from him only by his cigar and his small black beard. He talked in a curt, business-like way, about such simple things— where was there anything peculiar about him? And now he began to tell his father about the profits in the manufacture of soda . . He had not been a convict—Liubóff had made a mistake! And Fomá found it agreeable to picture to himself how he would talk her brother over with Liubóff.

More than once, during her father's conversation, had she made her appearance in the doorway. Her face was beaming with happiness, and her eyes surveyed with rapture the black form of Tarás, clothed in such a peculiar thick coat, with pockets on the sides, and large buttons. She walked on tiptoe, and kept stretching out her neck in the direction

of her brother. Fomá glanced inquiringly at her, but she did not notice him, but kept running back and forth constantly past the door, with plates and bottles in her hands.

It so happened that she glanced into the room precisely at the moment when her brother was telling her father about the convict affair. She stood rooted to the spot, holding a tray in her outstretched hands, and listened to everything her brother said about the punishment inflicted on him. She listened—and slowly went away, without having caught Fomá's surprised and derisive glance. Engrossed in his reflections concerning Tarás, and somewhat offended because no one paid any attention to him, and because Tarás, since he had shaken hands with him, when they made acquaintance, had never once glanced at him,—Fomá ceased, for a minute, to follow the conversation of the Mayákins, and suddenly felt himself grasped by the shoulder. He started, and sprang to his feet, almost overturning his godfather, who was standing before him with an excited countenance:

"There—look! There's—a man for you! That's what a Mayákin is like! They have boiled him in seven-fold lye, they have squeezed the oil out of him, but he's alive! And rich! Do you understand? Without any help whatever . . alone, he has forced his own way to his own place and—he is proud! That signifies that he's a Mayákin! A Mayákin signifies a man, who holds his fate in his own hands . . Do you understand? Take pattern! Look at him! . . There's not such another in a hundred—and you'd have to search to find one such in a thousand . . Wha-at? Now you must know: You can't forge a Mayákin over from a man into either a devil or an angel . . ."

Stunned by this tempestuous attack, Fomá became confused, and did not know what to say to the old man in reply

to his noisy boasts. He saw that Tarás was staring at his father, as he quietly smoked away at his cigar, and that the corners of his lips were quivering with laughter. His face was patronizingly-contented, and his whole figure had something of well-bred haughtiness about it. He seemed to be amused by the old man's joy.

But Yákoff Tarásovitch poked Fomá in the chest with his finger, and said:

"I don't know him, my own son . . he hasn't opened his soul to me . . Perhaps such a difference has sprung up between us, that not only can the eagle not fly—but even the devil cannot make his way across it . . . Perhaps his blood has over-boiled so that not even the scent of his father's is left in it . . but—he's a Mayákin! And I discern it instantly . . I discern it, and I say: 'Now lettest thou Thy servant depart in peace, O Lord!'"

The old man was quivering all over with the fever of his exultation, and fairly danced up and down as he stood in front of Fomá.

"Come, calm yourself, my dear father!" said Tarás, rising from his chair in a leisurely manner, and approaching his father.—"Why disturb the young man? Come, sit down . ."

He smiled in an easy way at Fomá, and taking his father by the arm, led him to the table.

"I believe in blood!" said Yákoff Tarásovitch.—"In blood of race—all power lies in it! My father, I remember, said to me: 'Yáshka! You are my genuine blood!' You see—the blood of the Mayákins is thick—it is transfused from father to father, and no woman ever dilutes it. But we will drink some champagne! Shall we? Well, all right! Tell me again . . tell me about yourself . . what it is like off there in Siberia?"

And once more, as though frightened and sobered by some idea, the old man fixed searching eyes upon his son's face. And a few minutes later, his son's circumstantial but brief replies again aroused him to noisy rapture. Fomá continued to listen and to watch, as he sat peaceably on in his corner.

"Gold mining, of course, is a solid business," said Tarás calmly and with dignity, "but nevertheless, it is a risky operation, and one which demands large capital . . The earth says not a word about what it has inside of it . . It is very profitable to deal with the natives . . Trading with them, even if one is only indifferently fitted out, yields an enormous percentage. That is a perfectly safe enterprise . . But it is tiresome, it must be admitted. It does not require much brains, . . nowhere does it develop an extraordinary man, a man of large dimensions . . ."

Liubóff entered, and invited them all into the dining-room. When the Mayákins betook themselves thither, Fomá unperceived plucked Liubóff by the sleeve, and she remained alone with him, inquiring hastily:

"What do you want?"

"Nothing . ." said Fomá, with a smile.—"I want to ask you if you are glad?"

"Of course!" exclaimed Liubóff.

"What about?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"Just that . . What about?"

"You're queer!" said Liubóff, casting a glance of amazement at him. "Can't you see?"

"What?" asked Fomá, derisively.

"Fie! What ails you?" said Liubóff, looking uneasily at him.

"Ekh—you goose!" drawled Fomá aloud, with con-

temptuous pity.—"Can anything good be born of your father—can anything good be born in our merchant class? As well expect raspberries from a radish!—But you told me a lie: Tarás is this, Tarás is that . . What is there about him? He's just a merchant, nothing more . . And he has the real merchant's paunch. He-he!"—He was gratified to note that the young girl, disconcerted by his remarks, was biting her lips, now flushing, now paling.

"You . . you, Fomá . . ." she began, with a sigh, and suddenly stamping her foot, she screamed at him:

"Don't dare to talk to me!"

On the threshold of the room she turned toward him her angry face, and in an undertone, with energy, she hurled at him:

"Ugh, you hateful thing!"

Fomá broke out laughing. He did not wish to go to the table, where sat three happy people, animatedly chatting with one another. He heard their merry voices, their contented laughter, the rattle of the dishes, and comprehended that there was no place beside them for him, with that burden on his heart. And there was no place for him anywhere. If all people only hated him—like Liubóff just now,—he would be more at his ease among them,—he thought. Then he would know how to behave toward them, he would find something to say to them. But now—it was incomprehensible: whether they were pitying him, or laughing at him, because he had lost his way, and could not accommodate himself to anything. As he stood alone in the middle of the room Fomá, unconsciously to himself, resolved to go away from this house, where people were rejoicing, and where he was superfluous. As he emerged into the street, he felt offended at the Mayákins: yet they were the only people in the world who stood near to him. Before

him surged up the face of his god-father, on which the wrinkles were quivering with emotion; illuminated by the joyous gleam of his green eyes, it seemed to beam with a phosphorescent light.

"He shines in darkness and decay," he reflected, viciously. Then he recalled Tarás's calm, serious countenance, and beside it, the figure of Liubóff rushing impetuously toward it. This aroused within him envy—and sorrow.

"Who will gaze at me like that? Not a soul . . ."

He came to himself from his meditations on the quay, at the wharves, aroused by the noise of toil. Various articles and wares were being carried and driven in every direction; people were moving about briskly, urging on their horses irritably, shouting at one another, filling the street with unintelligible bustle, and the deafening uproar of hurried labor. They were rushing about on the narrow strip of ground paved with stone, built up, on one side, with lofty houses, on the other cut off by a steep ravine toward the river, and their seething turmoil produced upon Fomá the impression that they were all assembled together to flee from this toil in mire, narrow quarters and noise—had assembled to flee, and were hurrying to finish off, after a fashion, what remained undone and would not release them. Huge steamers were already awaiting them, standing along the shore, and emitting columns of smoke from their funnels. The turbid water of the river, closely covered with vessels, plashed plaintively and softly against the shores, as though entreating that a minute's rest and repose might be granted to it.

"Your Honor!" rang out a hoarse cry just over Fomá's ear.—"Contribute a measure of liquor in honor of the building!"

Fomá glanced indifferently at the petitioner: he was a

huge, bearded fellow, bare-footed, with a tattered shirt, and a bruised, swollen face.

"Go away!" muttered Fomá, and turned away from him.

"Merchant! You must die—you can't take your money with you—give me enough for a small glass! Or are you too lazy to put your hand in your pocket?"

Fomá took another look at the petitioner: the latter stood before him, covered more with mud than with clothing, and shaking with intoxication, waited persistently, staring Fomá in the face with swollen, blood-shot eyes.

"Is that the way to ask?" Fomá inquired of him.

"What do you want—is a man to go down on his knees for the sake of a twenty-kopék piece?" asked the tatterdemalion impudently.

"Take that!" and Fomá gave him some small change.

"Thanks . . fifteen kopéks . . thanks! But if you'll give fifteen more—I'll crawl on all fours to that pothouse yonder—would you like to have me?!" proposed the man.

"Come, let me alone!" said Fomá, waving him off with his arm.

"If people would only give us necessaries, but from superfluity God has delivered us,"—said the tatterdemalion, and stepped aside.

Fomá gazed after him and thought:

"Now, there's a ruined man, but how bold he is . . He asks alms as though he were demanding a debt . . . Where do such people get their boldness?"

And, with a deep sigh, he answered himself:

"From freedom . . The man is not fettered in any way . . what has he to regret? what has he to fear? But what do I fear? What do I regret?"

These two questions seemed to smite Fomá's heart, and

called forth within him a dull amazement. He gazed at the movement of the laboring men, and meditated obstinately: "What did he regret? What did he fear?"

"Evidently, I shall never be able of myself, by my own strength, to get out anywhere . . like a fool, I shall move about among people—sneered at and insulted by all . . Now, if they would only repulse me . . if they would only hate me . . then . . . then—'take yourself off to the ends of the earth! . . Whether you like it or not—be off!'"

From one of the wharves the merry song of "The Little Oaken Cudgel" had already been floating through the air for a long time. The stevedores were performing some labor which required brisk movements, and were adapting the song and its refrain to them.

"In the taverns the great merchants
Are drinking liquors thick,—"

chanted the leader, in a dashing recitative. The guild chimed in unanimously:

"Hey, there little oaken cudgel, heave—ho!"

Then the basses tossed firm sounds into the air:

"Heave-ho!"

And the tenors repeated after them:

"Heave-ho!"

Fomá listened to the song, and walked toward it, along the wharf. There he saw that the stevedores, arranged in two rows, were hauling out of the steamer's hold huge casks of salted fish. Dirty, clad in red shirts, with collars unbuttoned, with their sleeves rolled up on their arms, which were

bare to the elbow, they stood over the hold, and, jesting merrily, with faces animated by toil, they tugged away, all together, in time with their song, at the ropes. And from the hold rose up the high, laughing voice of an invisible leader:

"But for these peasant throats of ours
There is not enough vódka . . ."

And the guild, loudly, and in union, like one vast breast, sighed forth:

"Ekh, little oaken cudgel, heave—ho!"

Fomá felt pleased yet envious, at the sight of this labor, as harmonious as music. The dirty faces of the stevedores were illuminated with smiles, the work was easy, it was going on well, and the song-leader was in an artistic mood. It occurred to Fomá that it would be a good thing to toil thus in unison, with kindly comrades, to a cheerful song, to rest from labor, to drink off a glass of vódka, and to eat greasy cabbage soup, prepared by the fat and sprightly matron of the guild.

"Look lively, lads, look lively there!" rang out a hoarse, unpleasant voice beside him. Fomá turned round. A thickset man, with a huge paunch, was tapping on the floor of the wharf with a walking-stick, gazing as he did so at the stevedores, with his little eyes, then he said:

"Bawl less, and work more briskly . ."

His face and neck were bathed in perspiration; he wiped it off every minute, with his left hand, and breathed as heavily as though he were climbing a mountain.

Fomá looked inimically at this man, and said to himself:

"The men are toiling, but he is sweating . . . And I am even worse than he is . . I'm like a crow on the fence . . . Good for nothing . ."

Every impression instantly turned into a stinging thought about his unfitness for life. Everything on which his attention rested, had in it some affront for him, and this element of affront laid itself upon his breast like a brick. At one side of him, near the baggage scales, stood two sailors, and one of them, a robust, red-faced young fellow, was relating to his comrade:

"Ho-ow they flung themselves on me! And so, my dear fellow, it be-gan! There were four of them—I was alone! Well, but I wouldn't give in to them, because I saw that they would thrash me to death! Even a ram will kick out, if they flay him alive . . Ho-ow I gave it to them! They immediately took to their heels, one in this direction . . ."

"But they gave you your fill, all the same?" inquired the other sailor.

"Of—cou-ourse! I caught it . . . I had to swallow five blows . . . But does a fellow hunt after such things? They didn't kill me . . . I may be thankful for that!"

"Of course, that . . ."

"To the stern, I tell you, you devils!" roared the sweaty man in a savage voice, at two stevedores, who were rolling a cask of fish along the deck.

"What are you yelling for?" Fomá said to him surlily, for he had started at the shout.

"What business is it of yours?" asked the man, glancing at Fomá.

"It is my business . . . The men are toiling, while your fat is melting . . . so just reflect, what need is there for you to yell at them?" said Fomá menacingly, moving toward him.

"You're . . . not very. . . ."

The sweaty man suddenly wrenched himself from the spot, as it were, and went away to the office. Fomá gazed after

him, and also quitted the wharf, filled with a desire to revile someone, to do something, for the sake of diverting his thoughts, if only for a short time, from himself. But they continued to obsess him.

"There's that sailor—he let himself loose—and he's safe and sound! We-ell, ye-es . . While I . . ."

In the evening he went again to the Mayákins. The old man was not at home, and Liubóff was sitting in the dining-room, with her brother, drinking tea. As he approached the door, Fomá heard the hoarse voice of Tarás saying:

"What makes father bother himself about him?"

At the sight of Fomá he stopped short, fixing upon his countenance a serious, searching gaze. Consternation was plainly depicted on Liubóff's face, and, at the same time, she said to Fomá, as though by way of excusing herself:

"Ah! So it's you . . ."

"They were talking about me," reflected Fomá, as he took his seat at the table.

Tarás removed his eyes from him, and planted himself still more deeply in his arm-chair. The awkward silence lasted for about a minute, and it was agreeable to Fomá.

"Are you going to the dinner?" asked Liubóff at last.

"What dinner?"

"Don't you know? Kónonoff is going to inaugurate a new steamer. There will be a Prayer-service, and then they are going to take a sail up the Vólga . ."

"I haven't been invited," said Fomá.

"There have been no invitations . . . He simply gave a general invitation on 'Change—'anyone who is pleased to honor me—I shall be delighted to see.'"

"It doesn't please me . ."

"Yes? Consider . . there will be a grand drinking-bout," said Liubóff, with a sidelong glance at him.

"I will drink at my own expense, if I feel like it . . ."

"I know . ." said Liubóff, with an expressive nod.

Tarás played with his tea-spoon, twisting it about between his fingers, and casting furtive glances at them.

"And where is my god-father?" asked Fomá.

"He has gone to the bank . . There's a meeting of the directors today . . The election is to take place . . ."

"They will elect him again . ."

"Of course . ."

And again the conversation dropped. Fomá began to watch the brother and sister. Tarás, having flung aside his spoon, drank his tea slowly, in great gulps, and silently pushed the glass toward his sister, with a smile. She, also, smiled joyously and happily, seized the glass, and began assiduously to fill it. Then her face assumed a strained expression, she seemed to be thoroughly on her guard, and she inquired of her brother, in an undertone, and almost reverently:

"Shall we return to the beginning of our conversation?"

"Pray do!" assented Tarás briefly.

"You said . . . I did not understand—how was it? I inquired: if all this is a Utopia, in your opinion, if it is impossible . . dreams . . then what is a man to do, who is not satisfied with life as it is?"

The young girl inclined her whole body toward her brother, and her eyes, with their intense expression, rested on her brother's tranquil face. He cast a weary glance at her, fidgetted about in his chair, and dropping his head, he said calmly and impressively:

"We must consider in what cause dissatisfaction with life has its origin? . . . It seems to me, that this arises, in the first place, from ignorance of how to work . . from the lack of respect for labor. And, in the second place, from an

incorrect conception of one's own powers . . . The unhappiness of the majority of people lies in the fact, that they consider themselves capable of more than they really are . . . And yet, not much is required of a man: he must select for himself some business in consonance with his powers, and do it as well as possible, as attentively as possible . . . You must love what you are doing, and then labor—even the very roughest—will be elevated to the dignity of creation . . A chair, made with love, will always be a good, beautiful and durable chair . . . And so it is with everything . . . Read Smiles . . haven't you read him? It's a very practical book . . . A sound book . . Read Lubbock . . . Bear in mind, in general, that the English are the nation most fitted for labor, which also explains their wonderful success it the realm of industry and trade . . . With them work is almost a cult . . The level of culture is always directly dependent upon the love of labor . . . And the higher the culture, the more profoundly are the requirements of the people satisfied, the less obstacle is there to the further development of man's demands . . . Happiness is the most complete possible satisfaction of these demands . . . There you have it . . . And so, you see, a man's happiness is conditional upon his relations to his work . . ."

Tarás Mayákin spoke as slowly and laboriously as though it were unpleasant and tiresome for him to talk. But Liubóff, her brows contracted, and her whole body bending toward him, listened to his remarks with eager attention in her eyes, ready to accept everything and absorb it into her soul.

"Well, but if everything is repulsive to a man . ." began Fomá suddenly, in a thick voice, casting a glance at Tarás's face.

"What, precisely, do you mean by 'repulsive to a man'?" asked Mayákin calmly, without looking at Fomá.

The latter bowed his head, planted his arms on the table, and thus posed, like an ox, continued to explain himself:

"Nothing suits him . . Business . . . work . . . No people . . no acts . . . If I perceive, let us say, that everything is a fraud . . Business is not business, but a sort of plug . . We plug up the emptiness of our soul with it . . Some toil, others merely give orders, and sweat . . . but receive more for that . . . Why is it so? hey?"

"I fail to grasp your meaning . . ." declared Tarás, when Fomá paused, conscious that Liubóff's contemptuous and angry gaze was upon him.

"You don't understand?" inquired Fomá, staring at Tarás with a grin . . "Well . . let's put it this way: A man is sailing on the river in a boat . . The boat is, probably, a good one, but beneath it, nevertheless, there is always a depth . . . The boat is stout . . but if the man feels conscious of this dark depth beneath him . . . no boat will save him . . ."

Tarás gazed calmly and indifferently at Fomá. He continued to gaze in silence, drumming with his fingers on the edge of the table. Liubóff fidgetted restlessly on her chair. The pendulum of the clock beat off the seconds with a dull, sighing sound. And Fomá's heart beat slowly and heavily, as though conscious that no one here would respond with a cordial word to its painful perplexity.

"Work—is not everything for a man . . ." he said, more to himself than to these people, who did not believe in the sincerity of his speech.—"It is not true, that justification lies in work . . . Some people never do any work at all all their lives long—and yet they live better than the toilers . . . why is that? But as for the toilers—they

are simply wretched—horses! People ride on them, they endure it . . . and that's all. But they have their justification before God . . . They will be asked: 'For what did you live, hey?' Then they will say . . 'we never had any time to think about that . . we toiled all our lives . . .' And what justification have I? And how will all the people who give the orders justify themselves? What have they lived for? But my idea is, that everybody ought, without fail, to know solidly—what he is living for."

He stopped, and throwing back his head, he exclaimed in a dull voice:

"Is it possible that a man is born to toil, accumulate money, build a house, beget children, and—die? No, life means something in itself . . A man has been born, has lived, has died . . why? All of us must consider why we are living, by God we must. There's no sense in our life . . there's no sense at all in it!—And then—things are not equal . . that is immediately visible. Some are rich . . they have money enough for a thousand men all to themselves . . . and they live without occupation . . . others, bow their backs in toil all their life, and they haven't a penny . . Yet the difference in people is small. . . The one without trousers lives and thinks, exactly like the one clad in silk . ."

Inspired by his thoughts, Fomá would have continued to expound them at length, but Tarás pushed his chair away from the table, rose, and said, with a sigh, in an undertone:

"No, thank you . . I don't want any more . ."

Fomá broke off his speech abruptly, and shrugged his shoulders, glancing at Liubóff with a grin.

"Where did you get hold of so much . . . philosophy?" she asked, drily and distrustfully.

"That's not philosophy . . It's . . only . . chas-

tisement—that's what it is!" said Fomá, in a low tone—"Open your eyes and look at everything . . then the same ideas will enter your brain . ."

"O, by the way, Liubóff, note the fact," said Tarás, as he stood with his back to the table, and inspected the clock, —"that pessimism is utterly foreign to the Anglo-Saxon race . . . What is called pessimism, in Swift and Byron, is only a burning, biting protest against the imperfection of life and man . . But cold, argumentative, and passive pessimism you will not meet with in them . . ."

Then, as though suddenly recalling Fomá's existence, he turned toward him, put his hands behind his back, and wriggling his thigh, he said:

"You raise very important questions . . And if they seriously occupy your attention, . . . you must read books . . . In them you will find plenty of very valuable opinions as to the meaning of life . . Do you read books?"

"No!" replied Fomá curtly.

"Ah!"

"I don't like them . ."

"Aha! But they might be of some assistance to you," said Tarás, and a smile flitted across his lips.

"Books? If people cannot help me in my thoughts—much less can books . . ." said Fomá sullenly.

He felt bored and constrained with this indifferent man. He would have liked to go away, but, at the same time, he wanted to say to Liubóff something insulting about her brother, and he waited to see whether Tarás would not leave the room. Liubóff washed up the tea-things; her face wore a concentrated, thoughtful expression, and her hands moved languidly. Tarás walked about the room, pausing before the shelves of silver, whistled, drummed with his fingers on the window panes, and inspected the things, screwing up

his eyes as he did so. The pendulum flashed past the glass of the case, like a broad, grinning face, and monotonously ticked off the seconds . . . Fomá, observing that Liubóff had several times looked interrogatively at him, with displeasure and expectancy, understood that he was in the way, and that she was impatiently awaiting his departure.

"I will pass the night with you," he said, smiling at her.—"I must have a talk with my god-father. And it's tiresome at my house alone."

"Then go and tell Marfúsha to prepare a bed for you in the corner-room . ." advised Liubóff hastily.

"I will."

He rose and quitted the dining-room. And immediately he heard Tarás put a low-toned question about something to his sister.

"It's about me!" he thought. All at once, this idea flashed into his mind: "I'll listen, and hear what clever people have to say . ."

He laughed softly, and walking on tiptoe, he passed noiselessly into the room which adjoined the dining-room. There was no lamp there, and only a slender band of light from the dining-room, passing through the unclosed door, lay on the dark floor. Softly, with a sinking of the heart, and a malicious smile, Fomá went close to the door, and halted.

"He's a heavy young fellow," said Tarás.

Liubóff's suppressed and hasty words became audible:

"He has done nothing but carouse . . . It's frightful, the outrageous things he has done! It began all of a sudden with him . . The first thing he did was to thrash the Vice-Governor's son-in-law at the Club. Papa had the greatest trouble in the world to hush up the scandal, and it was a lucky thing that the victim happened to be a man of very

bad reputation . . He's a card-sharper—and, altogether, a shady individual . . But it cost father over two thousand rubles . . And while father was taking all that trouble over one scandal, Fomá came near drowning a whole company on the Vólga."

"Ha, ha! What a monster! And yet he busies himself with investigations as to the meaning of life . . ."

"On another occasion, he was travelling on a steamer with a party of the same sort of people as himself, and all at once he said to them: 'Say your prayers! I'm going to fling everyone of you into the water, right away!' He's terribly strong . . They began to scream . . But he said: 'I want to serve my country, I want to purify the earth of worthless people . . .'"

"Well? That was witty!"

"He's a frightful man! There's no end to the wild pranks he has perpetrated for years past . . What a lot of money he has squandered!"

"But . . tell me—on what terms does father manage his business for him? Don't you know?"

"No, I don't! He holds a full power of attorney . . . Why?"

"Nothing . . . It's a solid business! Of course, it is established on a purely Russian footing, . . that is to say, abominably. And, nevertheless, it's a magnificent business! If it were properly attended to, perhaps . . it would be more profitable than gold-mines . . ."

"Fomá does nothing whatever . . Everything is in father's hands . ."

"Yes? That's fine . ."

"Do you know, at times it seems to me as though—that pensive mood of Fomá's . . those harangues . . were sincere, and that he might be a very decent sort of man

. . . But I cannot reconcile his scandalous life with his speeches and arguments . . . I positively cannot!"

"And it's not worth troubling yourself about . . . He's a hobbledehoy and a sluggard—seeking justification for his deeds . ."

"No, you see, he is sometimes . . like a child . . He was particularly so in former days."

"Well, I have said my say: he's a hobbledehoy. Is it worth while to discuss an ignoramus and a savage, who is determined to be a savage and an ignoramus, and doesn't conceal the fact? You see: he argues as the bear bent the shafts in the fable . ."

"You are very harsh . ."

"Yes, I am harsh! Men require it . . All of us Russians are desperately indolent. Fortunately, life is so arranged that, willy-nilly, we gradually brace up . . . Dreams are for young boys and girls, but for serious people, there is serious business . . ."

"Sometimes I feel very sorry for Fomá . . What will become of him?"

"That does not concern me . . I think that nothing in particular will become of him—neither good nor bad . . He's a hair-brained young fellow, he will run through his money, ruin himself—what else? Eh, let him go! Such as he are rare now-a-days . . The merchant understands the power of education now . . But he—that foster-brother of yours—will go to destruction."

"Quite correct, master!" said Fomá, opening the door, and appearing on the threshold. Pale, with lowering brows and writhing lips, he stared point-blank at Tarás, and said dully: "Correct! I shall go to perdition, and—amen! The quicker the better!"

Liubóff, with terror on her face, sprang from her chair,

and ran to Tarás, who was standing calmly in the middle of the room, with his hands thrust into his pockets.

"Fomá! O! Shame! You have been eavesdropping . . akh, Fomá!" she said, distractedly.

"Shut up! you sheep!" said Fomá to her.

"Ye-es, it is not nice to listen at doors," said Tarás slowly, never removing from him his contemptuous gaze.

"I don't care if it isn't!" said Fomá, waving his hand.—"Am I to blame because the only way to hear the truth is by eavesdropping?"

"Go away, Fomá! Please do!" entreated Liubóff, pressing close to her brother.

"Perhaps you have something to say to me?" inquired Tarás calmly.

"I?" exclaimed Fomá.—"What can I say? Nothing!—But you,—you, I think, can say everything . ."

"That means, that you and I have nothing to discuss?" asked Tarás again.

"No!"

"I am glad of that."

He turned sideways to Fomá, and asked Liubóff:

"Do you think father will return soon?"

Fomá looked at him, and cautiously quitted the house, with something like a feeling of respect for this man. He did not wish to go home, to his vast, empty house, where his every footstep awakened a resounding echo, and he walked along the street, enveloped in the mournful gray twilight of late autumn. He thought over Tarás Mayákin.

"He's a hard one . . . He takes after his father, only, he's not so restless. It strikes me that he is a cunning rogue also . . But Liúbka regards him as almost a saint . . . the little fool! How he did sum me up! A regular judge . . . But she was kind toward me . ."

But all these thoughts did not evoke in him any feelings—neither one of hatred toward Tarás, nor of sympathy for Liubóff. He bore within him something heavy and uncomfortable, something which he could not comprehend. This kept increasing in his breast, and it seemed to him that his heart was swollen, and was aching, as though from an ulcer. He watched this incessant and indomitable pain, observed that it grew greater with every passing hour, waxed in strength, and, not knowing how to put a stop to it, he waited stupidly for whatever might be the end.

Then his god-father's trotter dashed past him. Fomá descried in the carriage the tiny form of Yákoff Mayákin, but it aroused no sentiment in him. A lamplighter ran past Fomá, overtook him, placed his ladder against the lantern and ascended it. But it suddenly gave way under his weight, and clasping the lamp-post in his embrace, he swore loudly and angrily. A young girl jostled Fomá in the side with her bundle, and said:

"Akh, excuse me . ."

He glanced at her, and made no reply. Then hoar-frost began to sift down from the sky, tiny, barely visible drops of moisture, clouded the light of the street-lanterns, and the windows of the shops with grayish dust. This dust rendered it difficult to breathe.

"Shall I go to Ezhóff, to spend the night? I might have a drink with him," said Fomá to himself, and went to Ezhóff's, without having either any desire to see the feuilleton-writer, or to drink with him.

On the divan at Ezhóff's sat a shaggy young fellow in a blouse, and gray trousers. His face was dark, almost smutty, his eyes were large, staring and wrathful, over his thick lips projected a bristling mustache. He sat with his legs on the divan, clasping them in his huge, ugly hands, and laying his

chin on his knees. Ezhóff was sitting sideways in an armchair, with his legs thrown over the arm. Among the books and papers on the table stood a bottle of vódka, and there was an odor of some salt food in the room.

"Why do you roam about?" Ezhóff asked Fomá, and nodding toward him, he said to the man seated on the divan: "Gordyéeff!"

The man glanced at the newcomer, and said, in a harsh, creaking voice:

"Krasnoshtchékoff . . ."

Fomá sat down on a corner of the divan, announcing to Ezhóff:

"I have come to spend the night."

"Well, what then? Go on, Vasíly."

The latter cast a furtive glance at Fomá, and creaked out:

"In my opinion, you make a mistake in falling foul of the stupid people . . Masaniello was a fool, but what he had to do he did, in the best possible way. And that Winkelried was a fool, also, is certain . . but if he had not embraced in his bosom the imperial spears, they would have inflamed the Swiss. There are lots of just such fools! But —they are heroes . . But the clever people are cowards . . When one of them ought to deal a blow, with all his might, at an obstacle, he begins to reason: What comes from where? and how he may escape perishing in vain? And he stands before the affair like a post, until he dies. But the fool—he is brave! Bang—straight against the wall he dashes his brow! If his skull cracks,—what of that? Calves' heads are not valuable . . But if he makes a crack in the wall the clever people will pick it open into a gate, pass through,—and ascribe the honor to themselves . . No, Nikolái Matvyéevitch, bravery is a good thing, even without brains . ."

"Vasíly, you're talking nonsense!" said Ezhóff, offering him his hand.

"Why, of course!" assented Vasíly . . "How is a small person like me to do great things . . Nevertheless, I am not blind . . And this is what I see: plenty of brains and no sense. Just so long as the clever people meditate and make ready to act in the wisest way, the fools will get the best of them . . Only . ."

"Wait!" said Ezhóff.

"I can't! I am on duty today . . I'm behind time, as it is . . I'll run in again tomorrow,—may I?"

"Go ahead! I'll give you a dressing-down . ."

"That's your business . ."

Vasíly slowly put himself to rights, rose from the divan, took Ezhóff's dry, yellow little hand in his huge, black paw, and pressed it.

"Good-bye!"

Then he nodded at Fomá, and proceeded sideways to the door.

"You saw him?" Ezhóff asked Fomá, pointing at the door, behind which heavy footsteps still resounded.

"What sort of a man is he?"

"Assistant engineer, Váska Krasnoshtchékoff, . . Now, take example by him: the man began to teach himself to read and write at fifteen years of age, and at eight and twenty, he has read the devil knows how many fine books, and taught himself two languages to perfection . . Now he's going abroad . ."

"Why?" inquired Fomá.

"To study . . to see how people live there . . But see here, you're out of sorts—what's the matter?"

"He spoke sensibly about fools!" said Fomá thoughtfully.

"I don't know—as I'm not a fool . ."

"It was sensible! A stupid man must needs act instantly . . He flings himself forward, overturns . ."

"He is making a great fuss about trifles!" exclaimed Ezhóff.—"Say, this is what you'd better tell me: is it true that Mayákin's son has come home?"

"Yes . ."

"You don't say so!"

"What of it?"

"Nothing."

"But I can see from your face that there is something."

"We know all about that son of his . . we've heard of him before . ."

"But I have seen him . ."

"Well? What's he like?"

"Well . . the deuce knows! What have I to do with him?"

"Is he like his father?"

"Stouter . . plumper . . more seriousness . . he's . . such a cold fellow . ."

"That means, that he will be even worse than Yáshka. Well, now, my dear fellow, be on your guard! Otherwise, they'll gnaw you to the bone . ."

"Well, let them!"

"They'll rob you . . you'll become a beggar . . That Tarás plundered his father-in-law in Ekaterinbúrg very cleverly . ."

"Let him plunder me, if he likes. I shall not say a word to him about it, except, 'thank you.'"

"You're still harping on the old story?"

"Yes . ."

"To free yourself?"

"Well, yes."

"Drop it! What do you want of freedom? What will you

do with it? You see, you're not capable of doing anything, you're illiterate . . you certainly won't set to chopping fire-wood?! Now, if I could only free myself from the necessity of drinking vódka and eating bread!"

Ezhóff sprang to his feet, and placing himself in front of Fomá, he said, in a high voice, and as though declaiming:

"I would collect together the remnants of my tortured soul, and together with my heart's blood I would spit them in the faces of our edu-duca-ted people, de-dev-il take it! I would say to them: You insignificant insects! you are the best sap of my country! The fact of your existence has been paid for with the blood and tears of scores of generations of Russian people. O! you nits! How dear you have cost your country! What do you do for it? Have you converted the tears of the past into pearls? What have you contributed to life? What have you done? Have you allowed yourselves to be vanquished? What are you doing? You allow people to sneer at you . . ."

He stamped with rage, and gritting his teeth, he stared at Fomá with a flaming, wicked look, and resembled an enraged beast of prey.

"I would say to them: You! You reflect too much, but you are not very clever, and you are utterly helpless, and—you are cowards, all of you! Your hearts are stuffed full of morality and good intentions, but they are as soft and warm as a feather-bed, the creative spirit sleeps calmly and soundly in them, and they do not beat, but only rock to and fro, like a cradle. Dipping my finger in my heart's blood, I would smear upon their foreheads the seal of my reproaches, and they, the poor in spirit, wretched in their self-satisfaction, would suffer . . O, how they would suffer then! My scourge is subtle, and my hand is firm! And I love them too much to have compassion! They would suffer! But now—

they do not suffer, for they talk too much, too frequently and loudly, about their sufferings! They lie! Genuine suffering is silent, and genuine passion knows no bounds!—Passions, passions! When will they be regenerated in the hearts of men? We are all miserable through apathy . ."

Sighing, he began to cough, and coughed for a long time, jumping about the room and flourishing his hands like a madman. And again he took up his stand in front of Fomá, with pale visage, and blood-shot eyes. He breathed heavily, his lips quivered, disclosing his small, sharp teeth. Dishevelled as he was, with his head covered with short hair, he resembled a perch, just thrown out of the water . . It was the first time Fomá had seen him like this, and, as usual, he caught the infection of his agitation. He listened in silence to the little man's boiling speech, without making any effort to grasp its meaning, without caring to know against whom it was directed,—gulping down only its force. Ezhóff's words spirted over him like boiling water, and warmed his soul. "I will say to them, to these wretched idlers: Look! Life is moving on, and leaving you behind!"

"Ekh, that's good!" exclaimed Fomá with rapture, and fidgetted about on the divan.—"You're a hero, Nikolái! Oo-o-o! Give it to them! Throw it straight in their faces!"

But Ezhóff required no encouragement, he did not even seem to hear Fomá's exclamation, and continued:

"I know the measure of my powers, I know that my place is to shout.—Hold your peace! It is my place to cry: Silence! They will talk wisely, they will talk calmly, sneering at me, from the heights of their grandeur they will talk . . I know, . . I am a small bird, O, I am not a nightingale! I'm an ill-bred clown in comparison with them, I'm only a feuilleton-writer, a man to amuse the public . . . Let

them shriek and rend me asunder, let them! The blow will fall upon my cheek, but my heart will continue to beat, all the same! And I will say to them: Yes, I am an ignoramus! And my first advantage over you is, that I do not know a single truth from books, which is dearer to me than man! Man is the universe, and may he live forever, bearing the whole world within him! But you, I will say, you, for the sake of a word, which, perhaps, does not always contain a meaning that is comprehensible to you,—often, for the sake of a word, you inflict on one another sores and wounds, for the sake of a word, you sprinkle one another with gall, you do violence to the soul . . For this life will hold you to a stern accounting, believe me: the tempest will break loose, and it will sweep and wash you off the face of the earth, as rain and wind sweep the dust from a tree! In the language of men there is only one word, whose contents are clear and dear to everyone, and when that word is pronounced, it sounds thus: Freedom!"

"Smash away!" roared Fomá, springing up from the divan, and grasping Ezhóff by the shoulders.—With flashing eyes, he stared into Ezhóff's face, bending down to him, and sadly, woefully he almost groaned:—"E-ekh! Nikólka . . My dear fellow, I'm deadly sorry for you! I'm more sorry than I can say!"

"What's this? Who are you?" shouted Ezhóff, pushing him off, amazed and driven from his position by Fomá's unexpected outburst and words.

"Ekh, my dear fellow!" said Fomá, lowering his voice, which rendered it deeper, more persuasive.—"You are a living soul . . why should you go to destruction?"

"Who? I? I go to destruction? You lie!"

"My dear fellow! You won't say anything to anybody! Not to anyone! Who will listen to you? Only I . . ."

"Go to the devil!" shouted Ezhóff viciously, springing away from him as though he had been scorched.

But Fomá followed him, and said persuasively, and very sadly:

"Talk away! Talk to me! I'll report your words where they are needed . . . I understand them . . And, ah, how I will sear the people! Just wait! . . My chance will come! . ."

"Go away!" shrieked Ezhóff hysterically, squeezing his back against the wall, under Fomá's pressure. Discomfited, crushed, enraged, he defended himself against Fomá's arms outstretched toward him. At that moment, the door of the room opened, and on the threshold appeared a woman all dressed in black. Her face was angry, excited, her cheek was bound up with a kerchief. She threw back her head, stretched out her hand to Ezhóff, and said, in a hissing, whistling voice:

"Nikolái Matvyéevitch! Excuse me . . this cannot be permitted! The howls of a wild beast . . . roars . . Visitors every day . . The police are coming . . No, I cannot endure it any longer! You are the first I ever had . . Be so good as to vacate your lodgings tomorrow . . . You are not living in a desert . . there are people around you . . And an educated man, at that! A writer! All people require rest . . I have the toothache . . . I request that tomorrow you will . . . I shall paste up a notice of rooms to rent—I shall notify the police . . ."

She talked fast, and the majority of her words were lost in the hissing and whistling; only those words were distinguishable which she shrieked out in a shrill, irritated voice. The ends of her kerchief stuck up above her head like little horns, and quivered with the movement of her jaws. At the sight of her excited and absurd figure, Fomá began grad-

ually to retreat toward the divan, but Ezhóff stood still, staring intently at her, and listening to her remarks, as he mopped his brow.

"So now you know!" she screamed, and from outside the door, she said once more:—"Tomorrow, then! What outrageous behavior . ."

"The de-devil!" whispered Ezhóff, staring stupidly at the door.

"Ye-e-es! What a woman! That was severe!" said Fomá gazing at him in amazement, as he seated himself on the divan.

Ezhóff, hunching up his shoulders, walked to the table, poured out half a tea-glass full of vódka, swallowed it, and sat down at the table, with drooping head. For a minute they both remained silent. Then Fomá said timidly, in a low tone:

"How did this all come about . . . we hadn't a chance to wink, and—all of a sudden, such a calling to account—hey?"

"You!" exclaimed Ezhóff, in an undertone, throwing back his head, and gazing at Fomá with a wild, malignant expression:—"Hold your tongue! You . . . the devil take you . . . Lie down and go to sleep! . . You monster . . You nightmare . . . phew!"

And he shook his fist at Fomá. Then he poured out some more vódka and tossed it off.

A few minutes later Fomá, undressed, and stretched out on the divan, through his half-closed eyes, was watching Ezhóff, as the latter sat motionless, in a broken attitude, at the table. He was staring at the floor, and his lips were moving softly . . Fomá was astonished—he did not understand why Ezhóff had been so enraged at him. It

could not be because he had been ordered out of his lodgings? For it was he himself who had been shouting . .

"O the devil," whispered Ezhóff, and gritted his teeth.

Fomá raised his head cautiously from the pillow. Ezhóff, with a deep and noisy sigh, was reaching out for the bottle again . . . Then Fomá said to him, very quietly:

"We'd better go off to some hotel . . It's not late yet . ."

Ezhóff looked at him, and laughed oddly, as he rubbed his head with his hands. Then he rose from his chair, and said curtly to Fomá:

"Dress yourself!"

And perceiving how slowly and awkwardly Fomá turned himself on the divan, he shouted, impatiently and angrily:

"Come, be quick!—Embodiment of awkwardness . . . symbolical cart-shaft!"

"Don't curse!" said Fomá, with a pacific smile. "Is it worth while to go into a passion because a woman has squawked?"

Ezhóff cast a glance at him, spat aside, and uttered a harsh laugh.

XIII

"Are all here?" asked Ilyá Efímovitch Kónonoff, as he stood on the bow of his new steamer, and, with beaming eyes, surveyed the throng of guests.—"Apparently, all!"

And raising his fat, red, happy face upwards, he shouted to the captain, who was already stationed on the bridge beside the speaking-tube:

"Cast off, Petrúkha!"

"Yes, sir!"

The captain bared his huge, bald head, crossed himself vehemently, glanced at the sky, passed his hand over his broad, black beard, grunted, and gave the command:

"Back her!"

The guests silently and attentively watched the manœuvres of the captain, and, following his example, they also began to make the sign of the cross, their caps and tall hats flashing through the air like a flock of black birds, as they did so.

"Bless, O Lord!" exclaimed Kónonoff with emotion.

"Cast off astern! Go ahead!" commanded the captain.

The huge "Ilyá Múrometz," with a vast sigh, discharged against the edge of the wharf a thick cloud of white steam, and moved up stream as smoothly as a swan.

"Ekh, we're off!" rapturously cried Commercial Counsellor Lup Grigórieff Ryeznikóff, a tall, thin, good-looking man.—"It never quivered! It's like a lady in the dance!"

"Half-speed!"

"It's not a ship—but the Leviathan," piously ejaculated pock-marked, round-shouldered Trofím Zúboff, verger of the cathedral, and the principal usurer in town.

It was a gray day; the sky, thickly veiled in autumn clouds, was reflected in the water of the river, and imparted to it a cold, leaden hue. Dazzling in its fresh paint, the steamer floated along over the monotone ground of the river like a huge, brilliant spot, and the black smoke of its breath hung like a heavy cloud in the air. White all over, with pink paddle-boxes and bright-red wheels, it lightly cut the cold water with its sharp bow, and drove it away shoreward, but the glass in the round windows of the sides and in the windows of the cabin, gleamed brilliantly, as though smiling with a self-satisfied, triumphant smile.

"Gentlemen of this honorable party!" cried Kónonoff removing his hat from his head, and making a low bow to his guests.—"Since we have now rendered unto God the things that are God's, so to speak, pray permit the musicians to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's!"

And without awaiting an answer from his guests, he placed his fist to his mouth, and shouted:

"Band! Play 'Glory!'"

The military band, stationed behind the engine, thundered out the march.

But Makár Dobróff, founder and director of the local commercial bank, began to sing the words in a pleasant bass voice, beating time with his fingers on his huge stomach:

"Glory, glo-ory to our Russian Tzar . . tra-ra-ta! Boom!"

"I invite you to the table, gentlemen! Do me the favor! Take pot-luck . . he, he! I entreat you most humbly . . ." Kónonoff invited them, pushing himself through the dense throng of guests. The older men among them,

bald and gray, were clad in old-fashioned frock-coats, caps and boots with bottle-shaped tops. But there were not many such: chimney-pot hats, shoes and fashionable cutaway coats, preponderated. They were all crowded together on the bow of the steamer, and in response to Kónonoff's entreaties, they gradually drifted off to the stern, covered with an awning, where stood tables spread with the luncheon. Lup Ryeznikóff went arm in arm with Yákoff Mayákin, and bending down to his ear whispered something to him, while the latter listened and smiled. Fomá, who had been brought to the festivity by his god-father, after long exhortations, found no partner for himself among these men who were repulsive to him, and, pale and surly, held himself aloof from them. For the last two days he had been drinking heavily, in the company of Ezhóff, and now his head was splitting with a drunken headache. He felt awkward in this respectable, jolly company; the rumble of voices, the thunder of the music, and the noise of the steamer—all irritated him. He felt an actual necessity to get drunk, and one thought gave him no rest—why was his god-father so caressingly amiable with him today, and why had he dragged him hither into the company of these men, the chief merchants in the town? Why had he argued so persuasively with him, and even entreated him to attend Kónonoff's Prayer-service and dinner?

"Now, don't be foolish, come along!" Fomá recalled his god-father's exhortation.—"Why are you so shy? A man gets his character from nature, and in wealth you are the inferior of few . . You must treat everyone alike . . . come along!"

"And when are you going to talk seriously with me, papa?" asked Fomá, watching the play of Yákoff Tarásovitch's visage and green eyes.

"You mean about setting you free from business? He, he! We'll talk about that, we'll talk about that, my friend! You're a queer fellow! Are you going to enter a monastery when you have flung away your wealth? . . hey?"

"I'll see . . when the time comes!" replied Fomá.

"Just so . . . Well, and meanwhile, before you go to the monastery,—come along! Make ready quickly . . Rub your sign-board with something wet, for it's much swollen. And sprinkle yourself with cologne water,—get some from Liúba,—so that you will not stink of the pot-house . . Come on!"

Arriving at the steamer during the Prayer-service, Fomá took up his post at one side, and during the whole service he watched the merchants.

They stood in devout silence; their faces wore an expression of pious concentration, they prayed vehemently and zealously, sighing deeply, bowing low, casting their eyes heavenward with emotion. But as Fomá looked, now at one, now at another, he called to mind what he knew about each one.

There was Lup Ryeznikóff,—he had begun his career as the keeper of a house of evil repute, and had grown rich almost immediately. It was said that he had strangled one of his patrons, a rich Siberian . . Zúboff, in his youth, had made a business of buying thread from the peasants. Twice had he been a bankrupt . . Kónonoff, twenty years ago, had been tried on a charge of arson, and even now he was under indictment for the seduction of minors. Along with him—and this was for the second offence of that sort,—Zakhár Kirílloff Róbustoff,—a short, fat merchant, with a round face and merry blue eyes,—had been implicated in the same affair. Among these men there was hardly a single

one, concerning whom Fomá did not know something disgraceful.

And he knew that all of them were certainly envying Kónonoff for his success, because, year after year, he was constantly increasing the number of his steamers. Many of them were at sword's points with each other, and not one of them would show any mercy to the rest in a well-fought business matter, and all knew evil, dishonorable things about each other . . . But now, gathering around the triumphant, happy Kónonoff, they were merged in a dense, dark mass, and stood and breathed as one man, with concentrated silence, and surrounded by something which was invisible but strong, something which repelled Fomá from them, and made him timid in their presence.

"Impostors!" he said, to himself, by way of encouraging himself.

But they softly coughed, sighed, crossed themselves, made reverences, and surrounding the ecclesiastics in a dense wall, stood immovably and steadfastly, like huge, black stones.

"They are pretending!" cried Fomá to himself. But hunch-backed, one-eyed Pávlin Gúshtchin, who was standing beside him, and who, not long before, had turned his half-witted brother's children into the street, was whispering penetratingly, as he gazed at the melancholy sky with his one eye:

"O Lo-ord! Rebuke me not in Thine indignation, neither chasten me in Thy displeasure . ."

And Fomá felt that this man was calling upon God with the most profound, most steadfast faith in His mercy.

"O Lord God of our fathers, who didst command Noah, Thy servant, to make an ark for the salvation of the world," said the priest, in a deep bass voice, casting his eyes toward heaven, and elevating his hands:—"Watch, also, over this

vessel, and give unto it an angel favorable, peaceful . . . preserve them that shall sail upon it . . ." [1]

The merchants, in unison, with broad flourishes of their arms, made the sign of the cross upon their breasts, and one sentiment was depicted on all their countenances—faith in the power of prayer.

All these pictures engraved themselves in Fomá's memory, aroused in him perplexity as to these men, who, while managing to cherish firm faith in God's mercy, were so harsh toward their fellow-men. He watched them intently, desirous of catching them in a fraud, to convince himself of their falsehood . .

He was angered by their compact firmness, by that unanimous confidence in themselves, their triumphant faces, their loud voices, and laughter. They had now reached the table, set out with the repast, and were ravenously admiring a huge sturgeon, almost a fathom in length, handsomely sprinkled over with greens and large crawfish. Trofím Zúboff, tying a napkin round his neck, gazed with blissful, sweetly-puckered eyes, at the monster-fish, and said to his neighbor, the flour-mill proprietor, Ióna Yúshkoff:

"Ióna Nikifóritch! Look—a whale! Quite big enough to make a case for your person, perhaps . . . hey? Ha, ha! You could slip into him as easily as into your boots, hey? He, he!"

Plump little Ióna stretched out his short arm to the silver pail filled with fresh caviar, smacked his lips greedily, and cast a furtive glance at the bottles in front of him, being afraid of upsetting them.

[1] From the Church service appointed for blessing vessels. There is a special service, in addition, for war-vessels. Vessels are not "baptized," or "christened" in Russia; as they are not endowed with immortal souls, this would be regarded as sacrilege; and the name of the vessel is not mentioned in the service.—*Translator.*

Opposite Kónonoff, on trestles, stood a cask holding about a gallon and a half of old vódka, which he had ordered from Poland; in a huge shell, hooped with silver, lay oysters, and high above all the viands, rose a motley-hued pasty, made in the shape of a tower.

"Gentlemen! I beg of you! Help yourselves to what you like!" shouted Kónonoff.—"I have let fly everything at once . . that every man may suit his own taste . . Our Russian viands, native, and from afar, and foreign . . all together! It's better so. Who wants what? Does anybody want snails, or these crawfish—hey? They're from India, I'm told . . ."

But Zúboff said to his neighbor Mayákin:

"The prayer 'At the Building of a Vessel' does not apply to tug-boats and river-steamers, . . . that is to say, it isn't that it is not suitable, but it is not enough alone . . A river-steamer as it exists, is a place of permanent residence for the crew, and it ought to be classed with a house . . Consequently, it is necessary, in addition to the prayer 'At the Building of a Vessel' to recite also the prayer at the founding of a house . . But what will you have to drink?"

"I'm not much of a wine-drinker; pour me out some cumin vódka . ." replied Yákoff Tarásovitch.

Fomá, who was seated at the end of the table, among some shy, modest men who were strangers to him, repeatedly felt the old man's sharp glances upon him.

"He's afraid I'll kick up a row . ." said Fomá to himself.

"Dear brethren!" hoarsely cried the monstrously fat steamer-owner Yáshtchuroff.—"I can't get along without herrings! I positively must begin with herrings . . that's my way . . ."

"Band! Give us 'The Persian March' . ."

"Stop! 'How glorious' is better . . ."

"Toot away 'How glorious' . ."

The throbbing of the engine, and the noise of the paddle-wheels, mingling with the sounds of the music, formed in the air something which resembled the wild song of the winter snow-storm. The whistle of the flute, the sharp singing of the clarinets, the surly growling of the basses, the rattle of the small drum, and the rumble of the blows on the big one,—all fell upon the dull and monotonous sound of the wheels, as they beat upon the water, rang rebelliously through the air, drowned the noise of the people's voices, and floated above the steamer like a hurricane, causing the people to shout at the top of their lungs. Sometimes, in the engine, a vicious hiss of steam resounded, and there was something irritable and contemptuous in this sound, which unexpectedly broke through the chaos of the rumbling, roar and shouts . . .

"I shall never forget, to my dying day, that you refused to discount my note of hand!" shouted someone, in a vehement voice.

"Sto-op! Is this the place for accounts?" rang out Bobróff's bass.

"Dear brethren! We must have some speeches!"

"Stop that band!"

"You come to see me at the bank, and I'll explain to you why I would not discount . . ."

"Speech! Silence!"

"Sto-op the mu-usic!"

"Play, 'in the Meadows' . ."

"'Madame Anglou!'"

"Not wanted!—Yákoff Tarásovitch, I beg of you!"

"This is called Strasburg pâté, ."

"Please! Please!"

"Patty? I—it doesn't look like it . . but I'll eat it, all the same . ."

"Tarásitch! Act . . ."

"My dear brethren! By heaven . . ."

"And in 'La Belle Hélène' she came out almost naked, the darling . ." Róbustoff's shrill voice, filled with emotion, suddenly pierced through the uproar.

"Wait! Jacob cheated Esau? Aha!"

"I can't! My tongue isn't a hammer, and I'm no longer young . . ."

"Yásha! We all entreat you! . ."

"Consider!"

"We'll elect you Mayor!"

"Tarásitch! Don't put on airs!"

"Shsh! Silence! Gentlemen! Yákoff Tarásovitch will say a few words!"

"Shsh!"

And just at the moment when the din was hushed, someone whispered audibly, in a loud, displeased tone:

"Ho-ow she-e will pinch me, the rogue . ."

And Bobróff inquired in his heavy bass:

"Whe-ere?"

There was a roar of laughter, which suddenly subsided, for Yákoff Tarásovitch Mayákin, rising to his feet, cleared his throat, and smoothing his bald spot, surveyed the company of merchants with a serious gaze awaiting their attention.

"Now, brethren, open your ears wide!" shouted Kónonoff with satisfaction.

"Gentlemen of the merchant class!" began Mayákin, with a smirk.—"In the speeches of educated and learned folks, there is a foreign word called 'culture.' So now, in

the simplicity of my soul, I am going to discourse to you on that word . . ."

"So that's what he's driving at!"—rang out a gratified cry from someone present.

"Shsh! Keep quiet!"

"Dear sirs!" said Mayákin, raising his voice.—"People are constantly writing in the newspapers about us of the merchant class,—that we are not acquainted with this culture, that we do not desire it and do not understand it. And they call us savage, uncultivated people . . . What is culture? It offends me, old man as I am, to hear such speeches, and one day I made a point of looking up the word, to see what it includes in itself."

Mayákin paused, ran his eyes over his audience, and with a triumphant grin, continued:

"My researches proved that this word means worship, that is to say, love, lofty love for business and order in life. So!—I said to myself,—so!—That means—that a cultured man is he who loves business and order . . who, in general, loves to arrange life, loves to live, knows the value of himself and of life . . Good!"—Yákoff Tarásovitch quivered; the wrinkles spread out on his face in rays from his smiling eyes to his lips, and his whole bald head became like some large, dark star.

The merchants stared silently and attentively at his mouth, and all faces were strained with attention. The men had fairly petrified in the attitudes in which Mayákin's speech had found them.

"But, if that is the case,—and it is precisely thus that we must interpret that word if it is so, then the people who call us uncultivated and savage, calumniate us, and spew out obloquy on us! For they love this word only, not its meaning, but we love the very root of the word, we love its actual inward essence, we—love business! And we, not they, have

within us the genuine cult toward life, that is to say, the adoration of life! They have taken a liking to argument, we to action . . . And here, gentlemen, is an example of our culture, that is, of our love for business—the Vólga! Here she is, our own dear little mother! With every drop of her water she can confirm our honor, and refute empty calumniation of us . . Only one hundred years have elapsed, gentlemen, since the Emperor Peter the Great launched decked barks upon this river, and now thousands of steam vessels navigate it . . Who has built them? The Russian peasant, an utterly untutored man! All these huge steamers and barges—whose are they? Ours! By whom were they planned? By us! Everything here is ours—everything here is the fruit of our brains, of our Russian gumption and great love for business! No one has aided us in any way whatever! We ourselves exterminated brigandage on the Vólga, we ourselves with our own rubles hired the troops—exterminated brigandage and introduced on the Vólga thousands of steamers and various vessels on all the thousands of versts of her course. Which is the best town on the Vólga? In which are there the most merchants? To whom do the finest houses in the town belong? The merchants! Who takes the most care of the poor? The merchant! He collects half-kopéks and kopéks; he contributes hundreds of thousands of rubles. Who builds the churches? We do! Who gives the most money of all to the empire? The merchants! . . . Gentlemen! To us alone is business dear for its own sake, for the sake of our love of introducing order into life, and we alone love order and life! But anyone who talks about us—talks, and that is all! Let him talk! When the wind blows, the willow rustles, when it ceases, the willow becomes silent . . . And neither cart-shafts nor brooms can be made out of the willow . . . 'tis a useless tree! And it is noisy because it is useless . . What

have they, our judges, accomplished, in what way have they embellished life? We do not know . . But our work is in plain sight! Gentlemen of the merchant class! Seeing in you, as I do, the most prominent people in life, the men who are most industrious and attached to their work, seeing in you the men who have done everything and can do everything,—I now, with all my heart, with respect and love for you, raise my brimming beaker—to the glorious, strong in spirit, laborious Russian merchant-class! . . . Long life to you! Long may you thrive for the glory of mother Russia! Hurrah-rah!"

Mayákin's sharp, jarring shout called forth a deafening, triumphant roar, from the merchants. All those huge, fleshy bodies, excited with wine, and the old man's speech, began to move, and emitted from their chests such a vigorous, massive shout, that everything in the vicinity seemed to quiver and shake.

"Yákoff! You are the trumpet of God!"—shouted Zúboff, holding out his champagne-glass to Mayákin.

Overturning their chairs, knocking against the table, which caused the bottles and dishes to clatter and fall, the merchants rushed at Mayákin, glasses in hand, excited, joyous, some with tears in their eyes.

"Ah! What has been said?" inquired Kónonoff, grasping Róbustoff by the shoulder, and shaking him.—"Understand it! A great speech has been made!"

"Yákoff Tarásovitch! Let me kiss you!"

"Let's toss Mayákin!"

"Start the music, band!"

"The fanfare! A march! . . the Persian March . . ."

"We don't want any music! To the devil with it!"

"Ekh, Yákoff Tarásovitch! The Ma-ayor!"

"I was the least among my brethren . . but I had understanding . ."

"Nonsense, Trofím!"

"Yákoff! You'll die soon, ekh, more's the pity! It's impossible to express how sorry we are!"

"Gentlemen! Let's establish a fund in the name of Mayákin! I'll give a thousand!"

"Silence! Wait!"

"Gentlemen!"—Yákoff Tarásovitch began again, trembling all over.—"And the reason why we are the principal people in life and the real masters in our fatherland, is—because we are peasants!"

"True!"

"That's so! We come by it legitimately! Now then, old man!"

"Stop! Let him finish!"

"We are the original Russians, and everything which proceeds from us, is native Russian! That signifies that it is of the most genuine sort . . the most useful and obligatory . . ."

"As clear as that two and two make four!"

"Simple."

"Wise as a serpent!"

"And gentle as . . ."

"A vulture! Ha, ha!"

The merchants surrounded their orator in a dense ring, gazed at him with their greasy eyes, and, in their excitement, were incapable of listening to him quietly. Around him rose a din of voices, which, mingling with the noise of the engine, and the beating of the paddle-wheels upon the water, formed a whirlwind of sound, that drowned the old man's voice. The merchants' excitement increased; all faces beamed with triumph; hands holding glasses were outstretched to Mayákin; they slapped him on the shoulder, jostled him, kissed him, gazed with emotion into his face. And someone exclaimed in rapture:

"The Ka-marínskaya! The Russian tune!" [1]

"We have done it all!"—shouted Yákoff Tarásovitch, pointing at the river.—"It's all ours! We have reduced life to order!"

All at onee a loud shout, which rose above all the rest, rang out:

"Ah! You did it? Ah, you . . ."

Then a vulgar oath resounded distinctly through the air, uttered with great venom, in a dull but powerful voice. Everyone heard it, and, for a second, fell silent, seeking with their eyes the person who had cursed them. During that second, nothing was to be heard but the deep sighs of the engine, and the creaking of the rudder-chains.

"Who's that snarling?" inquired Kónonoff, with a frown.

"Ekh! We can't help behaving outrageously!" ejaculated Ryeznikóff, with a contrite sigh.

"Who's that swearing at random!"

The countenances of the merchants expressed agitation, curiosity, amazement, reproach, and all grew restless, in a subdued sort of way. Yákoff Tarásovitch alone remained calm, and even seemed pleased at what had occurred. Rising on tiptoe, he looked away toward the end of the table, straining his neck, and his little eyes gleamed as though he beheld something that was gratifying to him.

"Gordyéeff . ." said Ióna Yushkóff softly.

And all heads were turned in that direction, in which Yákoff Mayákin was staring.

[1] The most popular folk-song—or, rather, folk-melody—in Russia. It is founded on the historical facts and conditions upon what were the frontiers, south of Moscow, several centuries ago; and the words, thus understood, have coherence and meaning. But only fragments of the many verses can be used, so coarse is the general character of the words. The tune, however, is very gay and irresistible.—*Translator.*

There, with his hands resting on the table, stood Fomá. With his face distorted by bitter wrath, his teeth exposed in a snarl, he was staring in silence at the merchants with burning, widely-opened eyes. His lower jaw was trembling, his shoulders were jerking, and his fingers, clutching violently at the edge of the table, scratched the table-cloth convulsively. At the sight of his face, wicked as that of a wolf, and that wrathful attitude, the merchants remained silent for a second.

"What are you opening your eyes at me for?"—asked Fomá, and again accompanied his question with a vehement oath.

"He's drunk!" said Bobróff, shaking his head.

"And why was he invited?" whispered Ryeznikóff softly.

"Fomá Ignátievitch!" began Kónonoff with diginty.—"There's no necessity for behaving indecently . . If . . well . . if your head is reeling—go quietly, peaceably into the cabin, my good fellow—and lie down! Lie down, my dear friend and . . ."

"Shut up!" bellowed Fomá, turning his eyes on Kónonoff.—"Don't you dare to speak to me! I'm not drunk . . I'm the soberest man here! Do you understand?"

"But wait a bit, my dear soul—who invited you here?" inquired Kónonoff, turning scarlet with the affront.

"I brought him!" rang out Mayákin's voice.

"Ah! Well, then . . of course . . . Excuse me, Fomá Ignátievitch . . But as you brought him Yákoff, . . you must tame him down . . Otherwise, there'll be trouble . . ."

Fomá said nothing, and smiled. And the merchants held their peace, as they gazed at him.

"Ekh, Fómka!" began Mayákin . . "Here you are disgracing my old age again . . ."

"Papa-godfather!" said Fomá, displaying his teeth in a grin. "I haven't done anything yet, so it's rather early in the day to read me a lecture . . I'm not drunk . . I have drunk nothing, but I have heard everything . . . Gentlemen merchants! Will you permit me to make you a speech? My god-father, whom you respect, has had his say . . and now, do you listen to his godson . . ."

"Speeches, indeed?" said Ryeznikóff.—"Why have any discourses? We came together to have a good time . . ."

"Come, drop it, Fomá Ignátievitch . . ."

"Better take a drink . . ."

"Let's have a drink! Fomá, you're the true son of your glorious father!"

Fomá, pushed away from the table, straightened himself up, and, still smiling, listened to the flattering, admonitory speeches. Among all these prominent men, he was the youngest and the handsomest. His well-built figure, in its closely-fitting coat, marked him out to advantage among the mass of fat bodies with prominent stomachs. His swarthy face with its large eyes, was more regular, more rosy than the red shrivelled ugly visages of those who stood opposite him, with expectancy and amazement. He inflated his chest, set his teeth, and pulling apart the skirts of his frock-coat, thrust his hands into his pockets.

"You can't plaster up my mouth now with flattery and endearments!"—he said firmly and menacingly. "You may listen or not, but I am going to talk . . There's no chance to turn me out here . . ."

He swayed his head, and elevating his shoulders, announced quietly:

"But if anyone so much as puts a finger on me—I'll kill him! I swear it, by the Lord God! . . to the best of my ability, I'll kill him!"

The throng of men opposite him rocked to and fro like bushes in the wind. Agitated whispers resounded. Fomá's face darkened, his eyes grew round . .

" Well, it has been stated that you have made this life . . and that you have made it of the most genuine and truthful sort . ."

Fomá drew a deep breath and with inexpressible hatred gazed at the faces of his hearers, which seemed strangely puffed-up, all of a sudden, as though they were swollen . . The merchants remained silent, pressing closer and closer to one another . . . Someone in the rear ranks muttered:

" What's he talking about? Hey? From print, or out of his own head? "

" O, you rascals! " exclaimed Gordyéeff, swaying his head. —" What have you made? you have not made life—but a prison . . You have not established order—but you have forged chains on men . . . It's close, suffocating, there's no place for a living soul to turn . . . Man is perishing! —You are murderers . . . Do you understand, that you are alive only through the long-suffering of mankind? "

" What's the meaning of this? " exclaimed Ryeznikóff, clasping his hands in indignation and wrath.—" Ilyá Efímoff? What's the meaning of this? I won't listen to such remarks . . ."

" Gordyéeff! " shouted Bobróff . . " Look out—you're talking improperly . ."

" For such speeches, oï, oï, oï! " said Bobróff reprovingly.

" Shut up! " roared Fomá, and his eyes became suffused with blood. " There you go grunting . . ."

" Gentlemen! " rang out the calmly-vicious voice of Mayákin, like the screech of a file on iron.—" Don't touch him! . . I earnestly entreat you . . don't hinder him . .

Let him snarl away . . let him amuse himself . . His words won't break you . . ."

"Well, no, I thank you most sincerely!" shouted Yushkóff.

But Smólin stood alongside of Fomá, and whispered in his ear:

"Stop, my dear fellow! What ails you—have you gone crazy? They'll do you . . ."

"Go away!" said Fomá firmly, flashing angry eyes at him. —"Go off yonder, to Mayákin, lick him down . . . perhaps a piece will fall to your share!"

Smólin emitted a whistle through his teeth, and stepped aside. And the merchants, one after the other, began to stroll away about the steamer. This still further exasperated Fomá: he would have liked to fetter them all to the spot by his words,—and he could find no such powerful words within himself.

"You have made life?" he shouted.—"Who are you? Swindlers, thieves . . ."

Several men turned toward Fomá, as though he had called them.

"Kónonoff! Are they going to try you soon about that little girl? They'll sentence you to hard labor . . . goodbye, Ilyá! It is no use for you to build steamers . . . they'll carry you to Siberia on a Government vessel . . ."

Kónonoff dropped into a chair; his face became suffused with blood, and he silently shook his fist. Fomá said hoarsely:

"All right . . . good . . I won't forget that . . ."

Fomá perceived his distorted face, with its quivering lips, and understood with what weapons he could smite these men, and in the most forcible way possible.

"Ha, ha, ha! The constructors of life! Gúshtchin,—

are you going to give alms to your little nephews? Do give them at least one kopék a day . . . that's not much—you have stolen sixty-seven thousand rubles from them . . . Bobróff! Why did you tell that lie about your mistress—that she had robbed you,—and send her to prison? If you had got tired of her—you might have given her to your son . . . it makes no difference, for now he has set up an intrigue with your other one . . . Didn't you know it? Ekh, you fat hog . . ha, ha! And you, Lup,—open that gay house of yours again, and strip your guests there like linden-trees . . .[1] The devils will strip you, later on, ha, ha! . . It's a good thing to be a scoundrel, with that pious face of yours! . . . Whom did you kill then, Lup?"

Fomá talked on, interrupting his speech with loud, malicious laughter, and saw that his words were taking effect on these people. Previously, when he had addressed his remarks to them as a whole, they had turned away from him, had gone aside, assembled in groups, and stared from a distance at their accuser, with contemptuous and evil eyes. He beheld smiles on their faces, he was conscious of something scornful in their every movement, and comprehended that his words, while they enraged them, did not pierce as deep as he wished them to do. All this chilled his wrath, and a bitter sense of the failure of his attack upon them was already rising in him . . . But just as soon as he began to talk about each one separately,—the bearing of his hearers toward him underwent a swift, sharp change.

When Kónonoff sank heavily down beside the table, as though unable to bear the burden of Fomá's stern words,—Fomá observed that across the countenances of several of the

[1] The peasants' shoes, and burlaps to wrap up anything and everything, from sheet-iron, trunks, cases,—to a pound of cherries, are made of linden-bark.—*Translator.*

merchants flitted caustic, malignant smiles. He heard someone say, in an approving, surprised whisper:

"The-ere . . that's fine!"

This whisper lent strength to Fomá, and with assurance, he began passionately to hurl reproaches, sneers, and oaths at those upon whom his eyes fell. He roared joyously, on seeing that his words were taking effect. They listened to him in silence, attentively; several men moved nearer to him.

Exclamations of protest became audible, but they were brief, not loud, and every time that Fomá shouted out anyone's name,—all became silent, and listened, and glanced maliciously, askance, in the direction of their comrade thus attacked.

Bobróff laughed in confusion, but his little eyes bored into Fomá like augers. But Lup Ryeznikóff, flourishing his arms, sprang awkwardly to his feet, and taking a long breath, said:

"Bear witness . . . What's this? No, I will not pardon this! I'll go to the justice of the peace . . . What's the meaning of this?" And, all at once, he squeaked in a thin voice, as he extended his arms toward Fomá:

"Bind him!"

Fomá broke into loud laughter.

"You can't bind the truth, you're talking nonsense! Even when it is bound, it does not grow dumb . . ."

"Goo-od!" said Kónonoff slowly, in a dull, broken voice.

"See here, gentlemen of the merchant class!" tinkled Mayákin's voice. "I beg that you will admire him—just see what a fellow he is!"

One after another the merchants moved up to Fomá, and on their countenances he beheld wrath, curiosity, a malicious sentiment of satisfaction, fear . . . One of the modest men among whom he was sitting, whispered to Fomá:

"Give it to them! . . . May the Lord reward you! . . Drive ahead at them! That will be reckoned to your credit . . ."

"Róbustoff!" shouted Fomá.—"What are you laughing at? What are you rejoicing over? You ought to be in the galleys also . . ."

"Put him ashore!" roared Róbustoff suddenly, springing to his feet.

And Kónonoff shouted to the captain:

"Put back! To the town! To the Governor . . ."

And someone said, in a reproving voice, which was trembling with agitation:

"This is a put-up job . . It was done on purpose . . . He has been put up to this . . and made drunk to give him courage . . ."

"Yes, this is a conspiracy!"

"Bind him! It's simple enough—bind him!"

Fomá seized an empty champagne-bottle, and brandished it in the air.

"Come on! No, it is evident that you will be forced to listen to me . ."

Again, with jovial fury, beside himself with joy to see these men writhing and flinging themselves about under the blows of his speech, he began to shout out names and vulgar oaths, and again the tumult of indignation was reduced to silence. The men whom Fomá did not know, gazed at him with eager curiosity, encouragingly, some, even, with joyful surprise. One of them, a small, gray-haired old man, with rosy cheeks and eyes like a mouse, suddenly turned to the merchants whom Fomá had insulted, and chanted in a sweet voice:

"These are words from the conscience! Never mind it! You must bear it . . . A prophetic accusation . . .

For we are sinners! You see, to tell the truth, we are ve-e-ery . . ."

He was hissed, and Zúboff even gave his shoulder a knock. He made a low bow, and disappeared in the crowd . .

"Zúboff!" shouted Fomá . . "How many people have you turned out of house and home? Do you have visions of Iván Petróff Myákinoff, who strangled himself, because of you? Is it true, that you steal ten rubles from the church-box at every Liturgy?"

Zúboff had not expected to be attacked, and remained rooted to the spot, with hand upraised. But he immediately afterwards began to whine in a shrill voice, hopping up and down queerly on one spot:

"Ah! You attack me also? Me-me, also?"

And suddenly inflating his cheeks, he began vehemently to shake his fist at Fomá, crying in a squeaking voice:

"The fo-ol hath sa-aid in his heart . . . there is no God! . . . I'll go to the Bishop! Freemason! To the galleys with you!"

The uproar on the steamer increased, and Fomá, at the sight of these men whom he had enraged, abashed and insulted, felt himself a gigantic hero of legends, who had slain a monster. They bustled about, flourished their arms, said something to one another,—some crimson with wrath, others pale, all equally powerless to stop the flood of his jeers at them.

"The sailors!"—shouted Ryeznikóff, plucking at Kónonoff's shoulder. "What are you thinking of, Ilyá? Hey? Did you invite us to be ridiculed?"

"By a puppy . . ." whimpered Zúboff.

A throng collected around Yákoff Tarásovitch Mayákin, and listened to his quiet remarks with anger, nodding their heads in approval.

"Act, Yákoff!" said Róbustoff aloud.—"We will all be witnesses . . . go ahead!"

And above the general hurly-burly of voices, Fomá's loud, avenging voice rang out:

"You have not constructed life—you have made a cess-pool! You have disseminated filth and stifling exhalations by your deeds. Have you any conscience? Do you remember God? A five-kopék piece—that is your God! But you have expelled your conscience . . Whither have you driven it? You bloodsuckers! You live on other people's strength . . you work with other people's hands! For all this you shall be made to pay! . . . You shall perish—you shall be called to account for all! For all—to the last little tear-drop . . . how much blood have people wept because of your great deeds? And hell is no place for you, you scoundrels, according to your deserts . . Neither in fire nor in boiling mire shall you be roasted. You shall not get rid of your torments for ages . . . The devils will fling you into kettles, and will baste you there . . ha, ha, ha! they will baste you! ha, ha, ha! Respected merchants . . constructors of life . . O you devils!"

Fomá burst into a loud laugh, and holding his sides, swayed to and fro on his feet, with his head thrown back.

At that moment, several men swiftly exchanged signals, flung themselves simultaneously upon Fomá, and crushed him down with their bodies.

"Cau-ught!" ejaculated someone, in a suffocating voice.

"A-ah? So that's your game?" shouted Fomá hoarsely.

For half a minute the whole heap of black bodies surged about on one spot, stamping heavily, and out of it proceeded dull exclamations:

"Throw him down!"

"Hold his hand . . . his hand! A-ah!"

"Grab him by the beard!"

"Fetch some napkins . . . tie him with napkins . ."

"You'll bite, will you?"

"The-ere! What? Aha-a!"

"Don't strike! Don't you dare to strike . . ."

"Ready!"

"That's good!"

"Let's carry him yonder—to the bulwarks . . ."

"Fling him to the winds . . he! he!"

They dragged Fomá bodily to the side, and having laid him against the wall of the captain's cabin, they stood away from him, adjusting their clothing and mopping their perspiring faces. He, exhausted by the struggle, and rendered helpless by the disgrace of his conquest, lay in silence, tattered, daubed with something, strongly bound, hand and foot with napkins and towels. With round, blood-shot eyes, he stared at the sky, his gaze was dull, and stupid, as that of an idiot, and his chest heaved unevenly and with difficulty . .

Now came their turn to jeer at him. Zúboff began it. He stepped up to him, gave him a dig in the ribs with his foot, and in a sweet voice, he inquired, trembling all over with the delectable joy of revenge:

"What now, you thunder-like prophet, hey? Well, now you are experiencing the sweetness of the captivity of Babylon, he, he, he!"

"Wait," . . said Fomá, in a hoarse voice, without looking at him.—"Wait . . until I get rested . . You haven't gagged my tongue . . ." But as he said this, Fomá understood that he could do nothing, say nothing more. And that not because they had bound him, but something had burned out within him, and it had grown dark and empty in his soul . .

Ryeznikóff approached Zúboff. Then, one after another, the others began to draw near. Bobróff, Kónonoff, and several other men, together with Yákoff Mayákin at their head, went to the pilot-house, anxiously discussing something in low tones.

The steamer was sailing toward the town under full steam. The bottles on the table quivered and rattled with its vibration, and this trembling, plaintive sound was more clearly audible than any other to Fomá. A throng of men stood over him, and said vicious, insulting things to him.

But Fomá beheld the faces of these people as through a fog, and their words did not strike home to his heart. In it, from out of the depths of his soul, sprang up a vast, bitter feeling; he watched it grow, and although he did not yet understand it, he experienced a melancholy, humiliating sensation . .

"Reflect,—you charlatan!—what have you done to yourself?" said Ryeznikóff. "What sort of life is now possible to you? For now, not one of us will even want to spit on you!"

"What have I done?"—Fomá strove to comprehend. The merchants stood around him in a dense, dark mass . .

"Co-ome now,"—said Yáshtchuroff, "your business is done for, Fómka . ."

"We'll give it to you," growled Zúboff softly.

"Unbind me!" said Fomá.

"No! .thank you most sincerely!"

"Unbind me . . ."

"You're all right! you can lie as you are . . ."

"Call my god-father . ."

But Yákoff Tarásovitch himself came up at that moment. He approached, halted over Fomá, surveyed his outstretched figure intently, with stern eyes, and heaved a heavy sigh.

"Well, Fomá," he began.

"Order them to unbind me . ." entreated Fomá, in a low, submissive voice.

"Will you get turbulent again? No, you may lie as you are . . ." replied his god-father.

"I won't say another word . . I swear by God! Unbind me . . I am ashamed! For Christ's sake . . you see, that I am not drunk . . Well, you need not unbind my hands . ."

"Do you swear that you will not be turbulent?"—asked Mayákin.

"O Lord! I will not . . . I will not . . ." groaned Fomá.

They unbound his feet, but left his hands bound. When he rose, he looked at them all, and said softly, with a piteous smile:

"You got your own way . . ."

"We always shall!" his god-father answered him, with a harsh laugh.

Fomá, bowed over, with his hands bound behind his back, walked silently to the table, without raising his eyes to anyone. He had grown shorter in stature, and thinner. His dishevelled hair fell over his brow and temples; the torn and crumpled bosom of his shirt projected from his vest, and his collar covered his teeth. He twisted his head to move the collar under his chin, and was not able to do it. Then the little gray-haired old man stepped up to him, adjusted what required putting in order, glanced into his eyes with a smile, and said:

"You must endure it . . ."

Now, in the presence of Mayákin, the men who had been jeering at Fomá held their peace, gazing inquiringly and with curiosity at the old man, and waiting for him to do something. He was calm, but his eyes gleamed

in a manner not entirely befitting the event,—contentedly, brightly . .

"Give me some vódka," entreated Fomá, seating himself at the table, and supporting himself against its edge. His bent form was pitiful and helpless. Those around him conversed in an undertone, walked with a certain caution. And all stared now at him, now at Mayákin, who had taken a seat opposite him. The old man did not give his godson the vódka at once. First he scrutinized him intently, then deliberately poured out a wine-glassful, and, at last, in silence, raised it to Fomá's lips. Fomá sucked up the vódka, and entreated:

"More!"

"That will do!" replied Mayákin.

And then ensued a minute of complete silence which was painful to them all. They approached the table noiselessly, on tiptoe, and as they drew near, they stretched out their necks in order to get a good look at Fomá.

"Well, Fómka, do you understand now, what you have done?"—asked Mayákin. He spoke softly, but all heard his question.

Fomá shook his head, and remained silent.

"For you there is no pardon!" continued Mayákin firmly, elevating his voice.—"Although we are all Christians, yet you will receive no forgiveness from us . . Now you know it . . ."

Fomá raised his head, and said thoughtfully:

"I forgot to speak about you, papa . . You have not heard anything from me . ."

"There, sir!" screamed Mayákin bitterly, pointing at his godson.—"you see?"

A dull murmur of protest made itself heard.

"Well, it makes no difference!"—went on Fomá, with a

sigh.—"It's all the same! Nothing—no good, came of it . . ."

And again he bent over the table.

"What did you want?" asked his god-father, sternly.

"What?"—Fomá raised his head, looked at the merchants, and smiled.—"I wanted to . . ."

"Drunkard! Worthless scamp!"

"I am not drunk!" retorted Fomá surlily.—"I have drunk only two small glasses in all . . I was entirely sober . ."

"Consequently," said Bobróff, "you were right, Yákoff Tarásovitch: he's out of his mind . . ."

"I?" exclaimed Fomá.

But no one paid any heed to him. Ryeznikóff, Zúboff, and Bobróff bent over to Mayákin and began discussing something in low tones.

"Guardian" . . . Fomá caught this one word.

"I am in my right mind!" he said, throwing himself against the back of his chair, and gazing at the merchants with troubled eyes.—"I understand what I wanted. I wanted to speak the truth . . I wanted to convict you . . ."

Emotion again overpowered him, and he suddenly jerked his hands, in the endeavor to free them.

"Eh, eh! Wait!" cried Bobróff, seizing him by the shoulder.—"Hold on to him!"

"Well, hold away!" said Fomá, sadly and bitterly.—"Hold away . . But what do you mean to do with me?"

"Sit still!" his god-father shouted harshly at him.

Fomá made no reply. He understood, by this time, what he had done;—that he had effected nothing, that his speech had not moved the merchants one atom. Here they were, collected around him in a dense throng, and he could see

nothing for them. They were quiet, firm, treated him like a drunkard and a noisy squabbler, and were plotting something against him. He felt himself pitiful, insignificant, crushed by this mass of men strong in spirit, clever, sedate . . It seemed to him that a long time had elapsed since he had vituperated them, he seemed to himself now queer and incapable of comprehending what he had done to these people, and why he had done it. He even felt within him something offensive, resembling shame at himself in his own sight. He had a tickling in his throat and he was conscious of some foreign element in his breast—as though some sort of dust or ashes had been sprinkled over his heart, and it beat heavily, unevenly. Wishing to explain his behavior to himself, he said slowly, and reflectively, without looking at any one:

"I wanted to speak the truth . . Is this life?"

"Fool!" said Mayákin contemptuously.—"What truth can you speak? What do you understand?"

"My heart ached—and I do understand! What justification have you all in the sight of God? Why do you live? Yes, I feel . . . I felt the truth!"

"He's repenting!" said Ryeznikóff, with a sneer.

"Let him!" replied Bobróff disdainfully.

Someone added:

"And it is pretty evident, from his remarks, that his mind is clouded . . ."

"It is not given to everyone to speak the truth!—" said Yákoff Tarásovitch sternly and reprovingly, as he raised his hand on high. "Men discern it, the truth, by the mind, not by the heart . . . do you understand that? If you felt —that was nonsense! A cow feels, when her tail is being twisted. But you—understand! Understand everything! And understand your enemy . . Guess what he is thinking of in his sleep, and then go ahead!"

According to his wont, Mayákin was on the point of being carried away by the exposition of his practical philosophy, but realizing in season that a conquered man is not to be taught by fighting, he stopped short. Fomá gazed stupidly at him, and swayed his head in a strange manner.

"Sheep!" said Mayákin.

"Leave me alone!" entreated Fomá plaintively. "You've had your way completely! Well—what more do you want? You have trampled on me, you have defeated me . . . so you want me! Who am I? O Lord! . . ."

All lent an attentive ear to his remarks, and this attention contained prejudice, malice . .

"I have lived,"—said Fomá in a suppressed voice.—"I have observed . . . I have thought. My heart has become ulcered with thinking! And now, the ulcer has burst . . Now I am utterly worn out! It seems as though all my blood had run out . . . I have lived to see this day . . still I thought that—now I will speak the truth . . Well, I have spoken it . ."

He talked in a colorless monotone, and his speech resembled the speech of delirium.

"I have spoken it . . and all I have accomplished is my own destruction . . . nothing more! No trace of my speech remains. Everything is safe! . . . But something flared up within me . . it has burned out and—there is nothing left . . . What have I to hope for now? . . And everything remains just as it was before . . ."

Yákoff Tarásovitch laughed venomously.

"Did you think you could lick a mountain down with your tongue? You accumulated malice at a bed-bug, and started out after a bear! Is that it? Madman! . . . your father ought to see you now . . . ekh!"

"And, nevertheless,"—said Fomá suddenly, in a loud,

confident voice, and his eyes flashed once more,—"nevertheless—you are entirely to blame! You have spoiled life! You have kept squeezing and squeezing—we suffocate because of you . . because of you! And although my truth against you is weak . . nevertheless—it is the truth! You are—accursed! Damn you all!"

He struggled on his chair, endeavoring to free his hands, and shouted, with eyes which flashed ferociously:

"Unbind my hands!"

They surrounded him more closely; the faces of the merchants grew harsher, and Ryeznikóff said to him admonishingly:

"Don't make a noise, don't kick up a row! We shall soon reach the town . . Don't disgrace yourself . . . and don't disgrace us . . Aren't we going to take you straight from the wharf to the insane asylum?"

"Ye-es?!" exclaimed Fomá.—"So you are going to put me in the insane asylum?"

They did not answer him. He gazed at their faces, and dropped his head.

"Behave yourself quietly! . . we'll unbind you!" said someone.

"It's not necessary!" said Fomá in a low tone . . "It makes no difference . . I defy you! Nothing will happen . . ."

And again his words assumed the character of raving . .

"I am ruined . . I know that! Only, not by your power . . but through my own weakness . . . yes! You, also, are worms in the sight of God . . And—wait! You shall choke . . I am ruined—through blindness . . . I have seen much, and become blind . . . Like an owl . . I remember—when I was a little boy, I chased an owl in a ravine . . it tried to fly, and crashed into something

. . The sun dazzled it . . It was all bruised—and it perished . . . And my father said to me at the time: 'that's the way with man: one man dashes about, dashes about, bruises himself, wears himself out, and flings himself into any place he can find . . just for the sake of resting' . . Eï! Untie my hands!"

His face turned pale, his eyes closed, his shoulders quivered. Tattered and dishevelled, he swayed to and fro in his chair, striking his breast against the edge of the table, and began to mutter.

The merchants exchanged glances of profound significance. Some, nudging one another in the ribs, nodded their heads in silence at Fomá. Yákoff Mayákin's countenance was immovable and dark, as though hewn out of stone.

"Perhaps we had better untie him?" whispered Bobróff.

"Let's go a little closer . ."

"No, don't . . . said Mayákin in a low tone.—"Let's leave him here, and let's send someone for a carriage . . We'll take him straight to the asylum . . ."

"But where am I to find rest?" Fomá began again to mutter.—"Whither shall I flee?"—And he sank down in a broken, uncomfortable attitude, all bent together, and with an expression of pain on his face.

Mayákin rose from his seat, and went to the pilot-house, after saying quietly:

"Keep watch of him . . lest he should fling himself into the water . ."

"I'm sorry for the young fellow . ." said Bobróff, as he gazed after Yákoff Tarásovitch.

"Nobody is to blame for his folly," replied Ryeznikóff grimly.

"Yákoff is . . ." said Zúboff in a whisper, jerking his head in the direction of Mayákin.

"What has Yákoff to do with it? He lost nothing through him . . ."

"We-ell, ye-e-es! . . now he . . . he-he!"

"Will be appointed guardian . . . he-he-he!"

Their quiet laughter and whispers mingled with the panting of the engine, and could not have reached Fomá's ear. He stared straight in front of him, with lack-lustre eyes, and only his lips trembled almost imperceptibly.

"His son has made his appearance . ." whispered Bobróff.

"I know him, that son,"—said Yáshtchuroff.—"I met him in Perm."

"What sort of a man is he?"

"A business-like . . clever fellow . ."

"Well?"

"He manages a big business in Usolye."

"Consequently . . Yákoff doesn't need this one . . Ye-es . . so that's it!"

"Look—he's weeping!"

"Is he?"

Fomá was sitting, leaning against the back of the chair, and with his head hanging on his breast. His eyes were closed, and from beneath his eyelashes the tears were trickling down, one by one. They ran down his cheeks upon his mustache . . . Fomá's lips quivered convulsively, and the tears fell from his mustache upon his breast. He remained silent and motionless, only his breast heaved heavily and unevenly. The merchants looked at his pale face, sunken with suffering, wet with tears, with the corners of his lips drooping downward—and began silently to move away from him.

And so Fomá was left alone, with his hands bound behind his back, sitting in front of the table which was covered

with dirty dishes, and various remnants of the feast. At times, he slowly opened his heavy, swollen lids, and his eyes, through tears, gazed dully and mournfully at the table where everything was dirty, upset, ruined . .

Three years have elapsed.

A year ago, Yákoff Tarásovitch Mayákin died. Dying in full consciousness, he remained true to himself, and a few hours before his death, he said to his son, daughter and son-in-law:

"Well, children,—live richly! Yákoff has devoured all sorts of grass, so it's time for Yákoff to quit the yard . . You see—I am dying, but I am not low-spirited . . And the Lord will set that down in my favor. I have bothered Him, the All-Gracious One, with jests only, but never with groans and complaints! Okh! . . O Lord! I am glad, that I have understood how to live—according to Thy mercy! Good-bye, my dear children . . . Live in harmony . . . and don't philosophize much . . You must know—that not he is holy who hides himself from sin, and lies very quiet . . You can't defend yourself against sin by cowardice . . the parable of the talents speaks of that . . . But he who wants to get the good of life is not afraid of sin . . . The Lord will pardon him his error . . The Lord has appointed man to organize life . . . but He has not given him so very much brains . . . which signifies, that He will not hold a man severely to account for his arrears of dues . . . For He is holy and full of mercy . . ."

He died after a brief, but painful agony.

Ezhóff was exiled from the town, for something or other, shortly after the affair on board the steamer.

A large, new commercial firm sprang up in the town, under the firm-name of "Tarás Mayákin and Afrikán Smólin."

During all these three years, nothing had been heard about Fomá. It was said, that after his discharge from the hospital, Mayákin had sent him off to some place in the Urál, to his mother's relatives.

Not long ago, Fomá made his appearance in the streets of the town. He was shabby, dishevelled, and half-witted. Almost constantly intoxicated, he appears—now gloomy, with frowning brows, and head drooping on his breast, again smiling with the piteous, mournful smile of an eccentric religious fanatic. He is sometimes obstreperous, but this rarely happens. He lives in a little wing in his foster-sister's courtyard.

The merchants and citizens who know him often jeer at him. As Fomá is walking along the street, someone will suddenly shout at him:

"Hey, you,—prophet! Come hither!"

Fomá very rarely goes to the person who calls him,—he avoids people, and does not like to talk with them. But if he does go to them, they say to him:

"Come, now, say a few words to us about doomsday, won't you?! He-he-he! Pro-phet!"

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